GREEN REBIRTH:

RHETORIC, IDENTITY, AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

IN THE REDEVELOPMENT OF GREENSBURG, KANSAS

AND THE LOWER NINTH WARD OF NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

by

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Green Rebirth: Rhetoric, Identity, and Environmental Justice in the Redevelopment of
      Greensburg, Kansas and the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans, Louisiana

Dissertation directed by Associate Professor Lisa Keränen

This dissertation offers a comparative study of the symbolic and material rhetoric of rebuilding in two American communities felled by natural disaster. It employs ethnographically-informed rhetorical criticism in order to assess how the communities of Greensburg, Kansas, and the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans, Louisiana, engage in rhetorics of sustainable rebirth. It argues that while the symbolic and material rhetorics of Greensburg and Katrina employ similar populist discourse and the soaring topos of national resilience, Greensburg succeeds where the Lower Ninth Ward fails in rebuilding swiftly post-disaster because residents and stakeholders present a united front to government officials and investors and benefit from normalized portrayals of Greensburg's deserving and brave (white) citizenry. In contrast, the Lower Ninth Ward faces conflicting and often overtly discriminatory media coverage of its residents and multiple, conflicting visions for redevelopment, some of which position residents as outside Others in need of relocation. Despite this turmoil and social vulnerability, local resident activists tirelessly work with outside organizations to map a sustainable future for the Ninth Ward.

Methodologically, this project contributes to the growing pool of rhetorical scholarship interested not just in official and vernacular texts, but also in the material, spatial consequences of those texts. The mixed-methods rhetorical criticism analyzes texts from informal ethnographic interviews and participant observation alongside government documents, media coverage, and ancillary materials intended for tourists and investors. Practically, the study provides a map of rhetorical strategies for other citizens looking to green or reinvent their communities, work against environmental racism, or fight for spatial and environmental justice. This effort is

informed by the belief that those affected by environmental disaster should be able to participate in those decisions affecting their well-being.

Theoretically, the project is significant in several ways. First, it contributes to an understanding of the rhetorical operations of neighborhood design and public space, and it expands understanding of sustainability rhetoric and explores how sustainability discourses are used to wield and conceal power across local and national contexts. Second, this study argues for a move toward *spatial* justice as a complement to social justice, and explores how sustainability is appropriated for discriminatory ends in New Orleans. It therefore offers insight into the racialization of space and the relationship between social and geographic vulnerability. Furthermore, this dissertation investigates the interplay between rhetorical strategies of race-averse discourses and normalized whiteness in media narratives of Greensburg and the Lower Ninth Ward, contributing new insight to critical race studies and critical rhetoric. Third, this study theorizes the relationship between disaster, space and place, memory, and rhetoric. It explores vernacular and official commemoration in the Ninth Ward as well as Greensburg, ultimately arguing that residents and stakeholders' opinions of a memorial's efficacy is directly related to that memorial's perceived authenticity.

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Rhetoric and Green Rebirth

Introduction

On May 3, 2007, Greensburg was one of many sleepy little towns in South-Western Kansas. The population hovered around 2000 and, in the words of one resident, "we were just a little stop in the middle of nothin."[1] On the night of May fourth, however, Greensburg was demolished by the largest tornado ever to touch down in a town, providing an occasion for a radical re-envisioning of the community. Miles away and far from "a little stop in the middle of nothin," New Orleans, Louisiana offers a case in contrast: this large, diverse urban center of 450,000 residents fell to its knees following Hurricane Katrina, one of the worst disasters in our nation's history.[2] In both instances, community members and city officials decided to rebuild as models of sustainability for the rest of the nation, albeit with differing degrees of commitment and success, different problems and challenges. As we are reminded by Barry Brummett, apocalypse—whether environmental or religious—prompts change and rebirth.[3] In our present era where economic, ecological, and naturally occurring or human induced disasters are routinely forcing communities to reshape themselves, it is essential for rhetorical critics to explore how these rhetorics of rebirth and renewal play out in and are affected by the material world.

The purpose of this dissertation is therefore to offer a comparative case study of the rhetorics of sustainable renewal and rebirth in the cases of Greensburg and the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans.[4] For rhetorical critics, comparative case studies are frequently used to reveal contrasting elements and common themes or rhetorical strategies in multiple contexts.[5] In the cases of Greensburg and the Lower Ninth Ward, members of both communities have made the choice to define themselves in terms of their futures as sustainable communities. Questions

of community identity, official versus vernacular rhetoric, and the power of urban design come to the fore as residents and planners in each place grapple with competing visions of past, present, and future. In this chapter, I offer background information on both of my proposed cases with specific focus on the theoretical and practical significance of the project. Then I propose three driving research questions that guide my study. Next I review key literatures that serve as the theoretical framing of my study. I conclude with a discussion of what this dissertation might offer to community planners, environmental justice activists, and rhetorical scholars.

Project Background and Significance: Sites

Greensburg, Kansas

Following a 2007 tornado that destroyed the entire town, Greensburg made the conscious and collective decision to rebuild "green." Partnering with advisors at the US Department of Energy, corporate sponsors like Sun Chips® and Chevrolet, and a number of different urban planning firms and nonprofit organizations, Greensburg considers itself an exemplar for other "greening" efforts across the nation. Their Greensburg Sustainable Comprehensive Master Plan (GSCMP), published in May of 2008, is largely realized just two years later.[6] Indeed, the project became a high-profile exercise in rural renewal, spawning a reality TV show, a documentary produced by Leonardo DiCaprio, and a collection of memoirs by the tornado's survivors.

Fig.1.1. Greensburg's new water tower amidst debris. Photograph taken by Katherine Cruger, July 9, 2010.

Greensburg provides an excellent case study because, unlike urban renewal or smaller-scale infill projects, this town has the curse and blessing of starting entirely from scratch, literally and figuratively redefining their community and the spaces of everyday life from the ground up. The project has been championed by former President Bush, President Obama, and other politicians as the future of sustainable development.[7] In the opening introduction to the reality television series, for example, Leonardo DiCaprio briefs viewers why Greensburg is so important:

> What if your community literally disappeared? For the people of Greensburg, KS, it did. But instead of an end, they saw a new beginning – not only for them, but for all of us. Greensburg is building and eco-friendly community. This town will be the green model for communities throughout the United States and the rest of the world. What they're creating is inspiration – an astonishing new future, but it hasn't been easy and we're just beginning. Please join us as we build a green American dream.[8]

It is easy to understand why this small town's tale struck a chord across America: in a word, it is inspiring. For journalists, politicians, corporate sponsors, and the town itself, Greensburg's journey from destruction to rebirth is a narrative gift, wrapped in recycled paper: A struggling farm town with a dwindling population, a global recognition that climate change is becoming more and more real, articulate town leaders like Steve Hewitt (city administrator) and even a large, jovial, outspoken, suspender-wearing mayor to act as Hewitt's foil. At least in the way that media figures portray Greensburg, the town's narrative is a story of American bravery, pride, strength, and innovation.

In the above example and many others, Greensburg is positioned as the hope for all of rural America, a model for communities of the future, the exemplar of the new (green) American dream, and proof of American resilience. The soaring epideictic rhetoric surrounding the project, however, provides just one of many points of view in what is ultimately a struggle over the very identity of the town, and its collective vision of the past and future. As successful as the Greensburg Greentown project may be, it is not without its detractors, especially among local residents. The first post-tornado mayor of the town John Jansen, who was appointed after the former mayor moved on rather than trying to rebuild, was removed from office during the first election after the tornado and Steve Hewitt feared he would lose his job as well. More than three times the candidates ran for city council than there were seats – a first for Greensburg. This high level of interest indicated that the community members were not entirely happy with the choices being made about their town and that they wanted to actively share in the decision making process regarding the town's future.

As indicated above, Greensburg provides an interesting and important case for many reasons. First, it is a town of many firsts. Greensburg is the first community to have all of its

municipal buildings reach LEEDS Platinum certification, which is not an easy task considering the environmental design expertise and economic capital required to do so. While there are a few corporately built and owned towns, (Celebration, Disney's town in Florida is the most famous example) Greensburg is unique in that much of the capital for their rebuild project came from corporate sponsors, while the town itself remains autonomous. Second, the town merits analysis because the official framing of Greensburg in media coverage and political rhetoric champions its triumph. Over and over again, the little town, whose current population is a little less than 1000 people, is represented as sustainable salvation for rural America and beyond. This town represents a new hope, a chance to do things right. Third, and perhaps most importantly, Greensburg provides an example of a rebuilding initiative where public participation has been frequent and well documented. Environmental communication scholars have often lamented the lack of this type of public access to environmental decision-making and Greensburg offers a chance to study the process of community development where the community is present, involved, and vocal.[9]

Lower Ninth Ward, New Orleans, LA

While many Americans may have missed the news coverage of Greensburg's tornado, the death, devastation, and contestation surrounding Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans captivated the nation's attention for months as blame was placed, replaced, and emplaced. Horror stories of police officers casting off their badges and partaking in looting while helpless flood victims died slowly of dehydration atop their roofs, or corpses floated down the streets, dominated the news.[10] While FEMA officials were praised for their quick, efficient response in Greensburg, the incompetent, disastrous handling of Katrina will long stain the reputation of every government official involved.[11]

A little more than six months after the storm, however, the Bring New Orleans Back Commission (BNOB) and the city's Urban Planning Commission released their "Action Plan for New Orleans: The New American City" (APNO.) Helmed by Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC (WRT), master planners based in Philadelphia, the Action Plan was far less detailed than Greensburg's treatise. It consisted mostly of sparse powerpoint slides dispensing keywords, catch phrases, and overarching goals, but offered little in the way of pragmatic solutions. Instead, the plan urged individual neighborhoods to adopt responsibility for their own planning and recovery—assuming, that is, that the BNOB commission deemed the neighborhood worth rebuilding in the first place.[12] Just as Greensburg had been framed as the new model for rural towns, the Action Plan labeled New Orleans "the new American city." And like in Greensburg, this Action Plan was not universally embraced by local government and citizenry, though negative reactions in New Orleans were more violent and on a much larger scale. Members of city council openly declared that they would dismantle the plan piece by piece before any action could be taken. Even before the document was published, members of *From the Lake to the River: The New Orleans Coalition For Legal Aid & Disaster Relief* published their "Report to Mayor Nagin's Bring New Orleans Back Commission: An Alternative Vision for Rebuilding, Redevelopment, & Reconstruction" in an effort to sway the BNOB commission to change their tune and distribute resources more equitably. At least six different redevelopment plans were created by nonprofit organizations for the city, none of which have been officially adopted at the date this dissertation was completed, which is more than five years after Katrina made landfall. Small scale projects have moved forward with differing degrees of speed, funded largely by corporate sponsorship or charity. However, the New Orleans Police Department was only reinstated in late 2008, the national guard remained in town to help with "crime-fighting" efforts

until March of 2009, and basic municipal services such as recycling are a long way from materializing.[13] Therefore, this case offers the contrast of heightened public disagreement and private infighting when compared alongside the Greensburg case.

Eight months after Hurricane Katrina obliterated the Gulf Coast, and a little more than a month after the Action Plan was released, The Holy Cross Neighborhood Association, in congress with a number of government and nongovernment organizations released their own plan for "Sustainable Restoration: Holy Cross District & Lower 9th Ward." Unlike Greensburg, this community was not starting from scratch, although more than 50 percent of the homes and businesses were uninhabitable following the storm. The population was much larger, displaced in different locations all around the country, and generally poorer, according to household income from census data.[14] While Greensburg was overwhelmingly white, the Lower Ninth Ward is predominantly (90 percent) black and had a 36% poverty rate according to the 2000 Census.[15] Nor has the Lower Ninth Ward seen the same kind of united progress that Greensburg has. Some nonprofits, such as the Brad Pitt-led *Make It Right Foundation* or the international *Global Green*, are working to build green housing in the neighborhood. Other organizations and residents, however, feel sustainability is the pipe dream of nosy outsiders in a neighborhood struggling with too many other social and economic problems.

Fig. 1.2. A common scene in the Lower Ninth Ward, five years after Katrina. Photograph by Katherine Cruger, June 13, 2010.

As I will discuss in detail in later chapters, however, this community is by no means helpless or hopeless. Local residents have come together in droves to assert their right to return after the storm and rebuild sustainably. While there is a high incidence of poverty, the Lower Ninth Ward also boasted the highest rate of African American home ownership in the nation before the storm and a strong history of civil rights activism and leadership. It is important to distinguish, therefore, between media representations of the Ninth Ward as poor, crime-riddled, and pitiable, and the more complicated reality. The Lower 9 thus merits rhetorical analysis because it allows us to witness the contrasting struggles, contestation, and vulnerability experienced by communities recovering from disaster.

The cases of Greensburg and the Lower Ninth Ward are significant for three reasons. First, they offer living laboratories of sustainable rhetorics in action. One of the most popular

narratives of rebirth in recent years has been that of sustainability.[16] Particularly when disaster strikes, the impulse to "green" or create "sustainable" living conditions in the wake of tragedy often emerges. A quick Google search for "sustainable Haiti" resulted in 2.6 million hits, while "Green Haiti" had more than one million hits.[17] Although the city of Vandergrift, Pennsylvania did not suffer a large Hurricane or earthquake, the rustbelt town, built by Frederick Law Olmsted at the turn of the century, was hemorrhaging residents and jobs following their own kind of disaster: the end of the steel boom. The town made a decision to be "reborn" green in 2009. As one journalist explains, "while many communities are embracing sustainable revitalization, Vandergrift's strategy is all-encompassing: to create an energy independent, ecologically low-impact, economically viable town from the ashes of its postindustrial wasteland."[18] After the recent earthquake in Christchurch, New Zealand, public officials evoke Greensburg and New Orleans as their inspiration, expressing a similar desire to "lead the country in 'green' designs as it rebuilds after the earthquake."[19]

The citizens of Greensburg made a similar decision two years before Vandergrift and three years before Christchurch, deciding that from tragedy would spring a renewed, "Better, Stronger, Greener" Greensburg. However, it can be difficult to know what a "greener" Greensburg, or a "sustainable" Haiti (or New Orleans, or Chile) really means.

Fig. 1.3. The Global Green House, Holy Cross Neighborhood. Photograph taken by Kathering Cruger, July 14, 2010.

Fig. 1.4. The Silo Eco-Home, Greensburg, Kansas. Photograph taken by Katherine Cruger, July 9, 2010.

Second, as Robbie Cox reminds us, "on a societal level," representations of environment should be transparent, and those affected by threats to environmental quality should be able to participate in decisions affecting their individual well-being.[20] Here, Cox means that when charismatic terms such as "green" or "sustainable" are used to justify one redevelopment plan and quash all others, the matter requires scholarly attention. The concept of sustainability has become a common topos in popular discourse; it is seen as a means, an end, and a justification for a million different projects and business ventures. Because "the discourse of naming is more than a means of persuasion," this powerful *telos* of "sustainability" must be scrutinized and parsed out.[21] Sustainability's impact on public life is undeniable, and it is important to explore what rhetorical work the concept does for professionals and citizens alike. Because these cases offer an opportunity to study environmental decision-making that includes participation of the

public, they afford the critical scholar the perfect opportunity to unmask discourses of power in a real world context.[22]

Third, these two cases are intertextually bound in ways that link their collective memories and epideictic rhetorics. As two of the largest natural disasters in recent American history, media coverage often relates them to one another. Even residents in Greensburg mentioned that because of what they had heard about New Orleans, they were fearful of FEMA's involvement and wanted to "build a fence around the town" to keep government officials out. More recently, DHS secretary Janet Napolitano referenced Katrina, Greensburg, and September 11th all together in a speech on national security and threats facing the nation:

> What always strikes me about the days and months that follow these tragedies is the resilience that emerges in the communities that are affected. The recovery in New York after 9/11, in New Orleans after Katrina, and in Greensburg, Kansas after the devastating tornado in 2007 all demonstrate the extraordinary ability of citizens to come together after disasters to rebuild stronger than before.[23]

Many I spoke to in the Lower Ninth Ward thinly veiled their bitterness and belief that race and socio-economic differences was the real reason why Greensburg was more of a "success." Comparing these two cases will give me a greater ability to theoretically work through rhetorics of sustainable development and the complex politics behind resource allocation, community renewal, and race and class.

Research Goals and Guiding Questions

In order to investigate the rhetorics of sustainable renewal in the cases of Greensburg and the Lower Ninth Ward, three research questions drive my investigation.

RQ 1: What symbolic and material rhetorical strategies do stakeholders employ to justify green rebuilding and reinvention, and what are the possibilities and limitations of these strategies? In Greensburg and the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans, some citizens are actively

invested in cultivating a green ethos for their community, while others are overtly opposed.

Some community members feel that a sustainable development plan offers a more certain future

for their homes and families, while others see it as a wild goose chase, a distraction from the real

needs of a recovering community. Essentially, RQ 1 seeks to determine what sort of rhetorics are

used in these debates of citizens, planners, and officials over the merits and warrants of

sustainability, and to what end. It is the driving question behind my project, and is therefore

addressed throughout my analysis. I am particularly interested in the interplay and contestation

between Lefebvre's representations of space, representational spaces, and spatial practices of

sustainability in communities recovering from disaster.[24]

RQ2: How is memory being evoked, cultivated, and utilized in each of the two

communities? Every community faces a complicated dance of negotiating the tensions between

the past and the present, or between its tangled history and the future unknown. When much of

the material markers of the past are wiped away through natural disaster, this relationship

becomes even more strained as communities negotiate which pieces of the past to memorialize,

which to rebuild, and which to leave behind--in the present two cases, for a new, "greener"

future. The natural disasters in both of these communities are the kind of events Ron Eyerman

would define as a "cultural trauma," which refers to "a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a

tear in the social fabric, affecting a group of people that had achieved some degree of

cohesion."[25] These traumatic events must then be made coherent through public reflection and

discourse, the reformation of collective identity, and the reworking of collective memory. The

second research question seeks to make sense of this process of remembering. For example,

Greensburg, KS now sports two new slogans: "Better, Stronger, Greener" and "Greensburg,

Green Town." This study explores how residents reconcile the rhetorical shift to "green" with past collective visions.

RQ3: How are the material places and representational discourses of these two cases racialized, gendered, or classed? Initial fieldwork suggested that residents of Greensburg and the Lower Ninth Ward used class, culture, and race-specific arguments to justify their decisions about rebuilding. Furthermore, critical geographers remind us that all spaces are racialized, inviting rhetorical analysis of how public officials and media professionals employ racially-coded arguments to further their own agendas. This study will therefore explore issues of environmental, social, and spatial justice. One of the first aspects that hit me when I began analyzing media coverage of Greensburg and the Lower Ninth Ward, for example, were the very real differences in how residents were framed and coded. Therefore, I interrogate how race, class, gender, and other markers of difference influence symbolic representation and material progress in these two communities.

Rhetoric, Space, and Memory: A Review of Literature

These interdisciplinary but rhetorically-grounded research questions touch on a number of rich literatures and areas of scholarship. For the purposes of this study, I focus on environmental communication, memory scholarship, and rhetorics of space and place, focusing particularly on the importance of these literatures to an understanding of sustainability and disaster recovery.

Defining Sustainable Cities in Environmental Communication

Whether they are devoted to decreasing humans' destructive impact upon the Earth, fervently arguing that Global Warming is a hoax, or just trying to make sense of the issue, most Americans recognize that concern about the environment is one of the key political, social, and

scientific issues of our time. As Lawrence Buell notes, the environment is always front page news in our modern "risk society."[26] While increased exposure to environmental issues is in some ways encouraging, oversaturation of the terms "green" and "sustainable" have made them difficult to pin down.

The Brundtland Commission, reporting on the environment and international development in 1987, coined the most commonly used definition of sustainable development as that which "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."[27] It seems simple enough: get what you need without dooming the future. However, this adjective can be applied to every element of the development process from design to marketing to construction. Businesses have long recognized the cultural cache that "green" projects bring with them. The prevalence of "greenwashing," along with little public demand for transparency, has made it so any corporation interested in positive public relations can market a wide array of practices, products, or policies, as sustainable without explanation.[28] As Craig Waddell argues, sustainable development and sustainability more generally are defined in multiple and contested ways, a struggle over meaning that is related to different rhetors' access to power.[29] It is essential, then, to explore what rhetorical work a concept like sustainability does for citizens and planners rebuilding their community.

Since Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring*, scholars have been grappling with how humans come to bare on the natural world around us. It was not until the mid-1990s, however, that organized disciplinary activity and published scholarship in the new field of "environmental communication" began to appear.[30] Robert Cox defines environmental communication as "seek[ing] to enhance the ability of society to respond appropriately to environmental signals relevant to the well-being of both human civilization and natural biological systems."[31] Cox later

elaborates, asserting that environmental communication is "the pragmatic and constitutive vehicle for our understanding of the environment as well as our relationships to the natural world; the symbolic medium that we use in constructing environmental problems and in negotiating society's different responses to them."[32] Tema Milstein refines these definitions by arguing that we can broadly distinguish between scholars who use theories of communication to draw attention to or explain humans' relationship with nature, and those who seek to intervene and improve humans' relationship with nature.[33] There are a wide range of themes and aims explored in the nascent field, from explaining the origins of the modern environmental crisis,[34] to highlighting discursive struggles over nature,[35] to the more pragmatic projects of revealing argumentative strategies present in environmental discourses[36] or providing tactical advice for advocacy groups.[37]

Although the robust field of environmental communication is growing exponentially, there is very little work that unpacks what "sustainability" means and how it functions rhetorically, despite the fact that sustainability is becoming a guiding ideograph of the twenty-first century.[38] One exception is the work of George Myerson and Yvonne Rydin, whose book *The Language of Environment: A New Rhetoric* attempts to unpack the meaning and use of environmental terms and tropes.[39] They note that whenever "sustainability" or "sustainable development" is used in public responses to environmental issues, the emphasis is on the new: "new consciousness, new crisis, new remedies."[40] Newness, however, is not a simple idea, and Myerson and Rydin elaborate that what is new in one context is familiar elsewhere. It can invite creativity and guide policy in a new direction in the best cases where sustainability emphasizes practicality, but "new concept discourse" can also invite skepticism.[41]

The authors are quick to argue, however, that "sustainability" and "sustainable development" are difficult concepts to critique, because they are terms that stand for a progressive future and cultural renewal. Sustainability is seen as ever favorable, and therefore critics are positioned as outsiders and extremists in most cases. "Although in fact viewpoints diverge, sustainable development and sustainability act centripetally – they draw voices together – to the dismay of some and the hope of many others," they write.[42] Although I appreciate the importance of such a project that tracks environmental discourse and its underlying themes, I believe that in the years since the book was published, the meaning of the word "sustainable" has only become more complicated and polyvalent. For example, elements of both my textual analysis and ethnographic work indicate that something akin to "green fatigue" has set in, making it less difficult to critique sustainability initiatives for being too green, or not green enough, too expensive, or not comprehensive enough.[43] My study contributes to this literature by revealing the complex tensions swirling around such green rhetorics.

Tarla Rai Peterson's 1997 book, *Sharing the Earth: Exploring the Rhetorics of Sustainable Development*, includes discussion of the origins and history of sustainable development as a concept followed by a series of three case studies of environmental argument.[44] Peterson notes, as Myerson and Rydin do, that sustainable development acts as a unifying alternative to mutually exclusive rhetorics of economic growth versus environmental responsibility. Instead, sustainable development calls for the formation of policies and practices that promote economic activity while at the same time protecting the biological world. Peterson augments Myerson and Rydin's initial ambivalence about the term, arguing that on the one hand it may be used positively "to promote a philosophical unity that could streamline the implementation of specific environmental policies."[45] At the same time, Peterson warns that

sustainable development is a "totalizing construct" that "enables efficient policy implementation partially by mystifying internal contradictions that may undermine both nature and future generations of human society."[46] This mystification must be explored, she argues, though there have been few attempts to examine context and meaning of sustainable development, and likewise few systematic explorations of how "environmentally sensitive development are framed by the concept of sustainability and mediated by its rhetoric."[47] More than ten years later, Peterson's challenge to environmental communication scholars remains largely unaddressed. This dissertation project attempts to answer Peterson's call for such research.

Peterson's cases offer competent dramatistic criticisms, ranging from more traditional public address texts to her final case involving some months of fieldwork and interviews in a town on the Mexico-Texas border suffering from serious pollution and environmental blight. Her underlying theme and goal for the future is public involvement in environmental decision-making and she stresses the need for incorporating perspectives by incongruity. "Community-based sustainable development," Peterson concludes, "offers a realistic hope for recovering the centrality of the public sphere. By regularly infusing that sphere with locally grounded participants, it encourages a healthy skepticism toward technological miracles as well as dogged determination to make things work."[48] Peterson's is certainly a hopeful position to take on sustainability and public participation. However, Peterson's study has one flaw very common to the field: she has made these recommendations based on the fact that public participation was *lacking* in all three of her cases. It has yet to be determined then whether and to what extent "community-based sustainable development" is possible, practical, or effective. Peterson recognizes this herself, of course, and calls for other scholars to engage multiple cases in many different contexts. This dissertation contributes two such cases and explicitly examines, per RQ1,

how communities use rhetorics of sustainability when deciding how to rebuild after natural disaster and during the inundation that follows from government officials, new media, and other interested outsiders in the aftermath.

Beyond these two book projects, there has been one other explicit attempt to interrogate the meaning of "sustainability" in the environmental communication field. Sharon McKenzie Stevens uses "a microcosm of the rhetoric of 'sustainability'" as a case study that can aid in the development of a theoretical framework for better integrating the study of activist rhetoric.[49] She is careful to note that she does not want to provide a more comprehensive definition of the term, but uses it instead as an illustrative case of her main argument that "mainstream and movement rhetorics interact, at least potentially, forming a dynamic system of meanings that cannot be fully understood in isolation from one another."[50] As a result, Stevens undertakes only a minimal analysis of the meaning of "sustainable ranching."

In fact, "sustainability" is taken largely as a given, unambiguous *telos* in much of the environmental communication literature. Finally achieving "sustainability" is often viewed as the end goal of environmentally-minded behavior modification. The United Nations, for example, lists "ensure environmental sustainability" as the seventh of the eight Millenium Development Goals (MDGs).[51] Cindy Spurlock, in an insightful and detailed performance studies piece on embodied food-centered advocacy, argues that place-based embodied experiences of "witnessing" such as sustainable farming tours may hold significant potential for challenging 'unsustainable' discourses of consumerism.[52] While Spurlock provides an interesting and productive discussion of the relationship between place, performance, memory, and political action, "sustainability" remains undefined or questioned throughout her work. Spurlock's reader learns that "sprawl" is "unsustainable," and perhaps as Myerson and Rydin point out, the term is

already mainstreamed and well understood.[53] It would be productive, however, in an article

about how environmental advocates can persuade in the wake of suburban sprawl, to interrogate

the values and beliefs that underlie such a sustainability project and how tourists respond to such

efforts. I do not mean to pick on Spurlock unfairly; she is certainly not alone in this treatment of

sustainability as the obvious, transparent, and unclarified end goal. In fact, methodologically and

theoretically, much of Spurlock's argument is innovative and well developed. I do want to argue,

however, that "sustainability" as a goal is embraced by the field of environmental

communication (who largely see themselves as scholars responding to an ecological crisis)

without adequate consideration of how the rhetoric of sustainability functions.

My study, then, seeks to build on the work done in environmental communication to

interrogate these taken-for-granted sustainability rhetorics in two cases and extrapolate how they

affect both individual and community identities. As Robbie Cox reminds us in his definition of

environmental communication, scholars in this discipline are "responding to environmental

signals," we must remember that, "the loss of habitat has real consequences."[54] In other words,

there is a materiality in environmental communication that cannot be ignored. Phaedra Pezzullo

and Cindy Spurlock both recognize this fact, and both reflect on the rhetorical power that

physical presence in a place and witnessing can have in changing hearts and minds about

environmental issues.[55] Other rhetoricians have also reflected on the importance of place and

materiality for an understanding of rhetoric.

Rhetorics of Place and Space

My study also contributes to an understanding of the connection between rhetoric and

place and space literatures. Michael Calvin McGee famously argued that a materialist

understanding of rhetoric insists "discourse, even language itself, will have to be categorized as

material, rather than merely representational of mental and empirical phenomenon."[56] Rhetoric, for McGee, is thus a daily social process, not an artistic product; it is an agent of social and political power. Raymie McKerrow argued something similar when he observed that discourses of power are material.[57] However, there is a significant difference between arguing, as McGee did, that rhetoric is real and has material consequences and arguing for the rhetoricality of the material, everyday lifeworld. And for most cases, rhetorical critical scholars have often privileged the textual over the material. Indeed, the very premise of our field is that words, genres, and discourses structure our understanding of the world. Such symbolist sympathies have often led rhetoricians to overlook the spaces in which rhetoric unfolds. As John Ackerman laments "rhetoric's academic legacy . . . privileges texts over spaces and schools over cities."[58] That is, we focus our attention on traditional texts such as public address, but do not often engage actively in "the public work of rhetoric."[59]

Over the last 30 years, however, rhetorical critics have increasingly recognized the significance of place as more than just a container for communicative action.[60] The most interesting of these material rhetoric projects for me, however, are those that attempt to grapple with bodies *in space,* and try to make sense of how space is both acted upon and acts upon its designers, users, and dwellers. As mentioned above, Phaedra Pezzullo interrogates how "toxic tours" of the sites of environmental pollution and degradation function rhetorically as spaces for invention and political dissent.[61] Kenneth Zagacki and Victoria Gallagher explore how the material rhetoric of specific physical locations, such as the Museum Park at the North Carolina Museum of Art, invite visitors to experience nature, suburban existence, and the human/nature interface in a particular way.[62] Both Greg Dickinson and Carole Blair adeptly examine material space in conjunction with the discourse surrounding that space.[63] Blair and Michel similarly

attempt to explain the rhetorical force behind the national monument of Mount Rushmore, recognizing that it is more than a gigantic sculpture on a mountainside or an insignificant stop on a cross-country road trip. Instead, Rushmore embodies an intertextual collection of histories and narratives that influence how Americans conceive of themselves and their nation.[64] Just as Michel de Certeau claims, these "spatial stories" help individuals locate themselves in their worlds.[65] In essence, monuments and buildings are not *just* structures, they can also tell us who we should be and what we should do.

In an earlier study, Blair and Michel attempt to remedy critical oversight of visitor interpretation in their reading of the Astronaut's Memorial in Florida.[66] They observe the memorial structure in great detail, pronouncing it an effective rhetorical site, yet they could not ignore the fact that visitors to the Astronaut's Memorial were more interested in the alligators rollicking in a nearby pond than in the memorial itself. Noticing the disconnect between their critical interpretation and the response of the visitors, Blair and Michel investigate where the visitors were, literally, coming from and how that effected their behavior at the memorial. Since a great deal of the tourists wore Disney apparel, the researchers went to Disney World to observe how rhetorical tropes of the theme park might be effecting how visitors on a daytrip from Disney interacted with the Memorial. In this case, the culture of one built environment steamrolls the culture of another.

Greg Dickinson has also illuminated the spatial dimensions of rhetoric and the rhetorical dimensions of space with remarkable deftness.[67] He often explores the rhetoric of postmodern spaces, such as Old Pasadena and Starbucks Coffee. In a world where every day is a struggle to fix meaning temporarily and identities are fragmented and complex, Dickinson identifies a desire for nostalgic "Memory Places" to ground us and "place both the landscapes and individuals

within a stabilizing and authenticating past."[68] Again, place is closely linked to identity, memory, and our conceptions of self.

These rhetorical scholars demonstrate how a memory place can be used by visitors as well as museum curators and other interested parties to serve specific functions, such as reifying the foundational myth of the American frontier in the case of Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki's exploration of the Buffalo Bill Museum, or contributing to the ethos of a collective national identity in Blair and Michel's treatment of Mount Rushmore. In a recent edited volume, Blair, Dickinson, and Ott explore exemplary places of public memory, attending to the rhetorical character of memory places and how they function for audience members and citizens.[69] In the introduction, they argue that particular kinds of places (museums, memorials, preserved sites, etc.) are "more closely associated with public memory than others," and as such, are noteworthy for their ability to attract thousands of visitors each year.[70] Memory places are objects of attention and desire, they argue. Their rhetorical power comes largely from the distinction between memory places and everyday life; memory places "construct preferred public identities for visitors" and propose specific relationships between past and present.[71] Blair, Dickinson, and Ott are correct to theorize the importance and rhetorical power of these commemorative public spaces. However, memorials and museums are certainly not the only aspects of the built world that act on users and dwellers. The Lincoln Memorial may be more closely *associated* with public memory than the series of subdivisions that seem to multiply daily along one's morning commute, but I argue that these spaces of everyday life are just as influential to and influenced by memory. As such, this study interrogates the neighborhoods where people live, transcending the sites exclusively meant for monuments or commemoration (though these are not ignored) in favor of larger sites, whole communities, where citizens carry out their daily comings and

goings. It is necessary at this juncture to explore memory scholarship more broadly, and how

rhetoricians and communication scholars have incorporated the study of memory into their work.

Linking Rhetoric, Memory, and Place

As many scholars have illustrated, linkages between these three terms coincide with the

beginning of our discipline in the streets of ancient Greek and Rome.[72] Memory is the fourth

canon of rhetoric, after all, and ancient rhetoricians instructed their students that, in order to

remember something, one should visualize it in a specific place.[73] More recently, Kendall

Phillips reminds us, "the ways memories attain meaning, compel others to accept them, and are

themselves contested, subverted, and supplanted by other memories are essentially rhetorical."[74]

Carole Blair argues that physical locations remain in our memory longer than mere ideas because

they "affect our material lives."[75]

One popular focus among rhetoricians concerns "memory places," which have the ability

to become "the concrete realization of the abstract memory."[76] Elizabethada Wright, for

example, draws from Foucault and de Certeau to explain how, as a physical place and spiritual

space, the cemetery confuses the symbolic and material, which allows forgotten memories to

survive silently.[77] As mentioned above, Greg Dickinson explores how Starbucks, Shopping

Malls, and Museums can all function as public memory places in a post modern environment.[78]

Aaron Hess argues that vernacular memory finds a digital place through the rhetorical

construction of web memorials, a topic I also explored in some detail in a past conference

paper.[79] These theorists highlight that memory places act as loci (be they material, symbolic, or

virtual) for rhetorical practices of mourning, identity construction, and contestation over

meaning.

Most memory scholars, however, seek to distinguish theoretically between the different types and functions memory can have. Maurice Halbwachs sees history and memory as opposing ways of recalling past events, for example.[80] Collective memory for Halbwachs is shared, passed on through generations, and constructed by a group. Memory is "living" by this account and distinguishable from individual memory because it is constituted collectively. Edward Casey expands on Hablwachs to provide a comparative phenomenology of memory, distinguishing between individual, social, collective, and public types.[81] However, Jeffrey Olick, building again of the work of Hablwachs, challenges scholars to talk through the process of social remembering and varieties of retrospective practices in a manner that does not oppose individual and collective memory to one another. He advocates using "collective memory" more broadly, as a sensitizing term for a wide variety of mnemonic processes, practices, and outcomes, be they neurological, cognitive, personal, aggregated, or collective. Olick's stance in embracing the plurality and complexity of memory is important for this study, as it opens up the possibility that memory is more about the present and the future than memory scholarship has given it credit for in the past.

Indeed, a singular definition of public memory is, by nature, elusive. Stephen Brown defines public memory as "a shared sense of the past, fashioned from the symbolic resources of community and subject to its particular history, hierarchies, and aspirations."[82] Browne's definition is somewhat stagnant, giving little hint of how memory functions, how it is "fashioned" and to what end. In contrast, Charles Morris defines public memory as " a purposeful engagement of the past, forged symbolically in public, profoundly constitutive of identity, community, and moral vision, inherently consequential in its ideological implications, and very often the fodder of political conflagration."[83] Morris' is the definition I find most useful because it highlights (1) the symbolic nature of memory, (2) the fact that it shapes identity, both

individual and collective, and (3) the underlying moral vision or normative function of memory. In my time onsite, all three of these aspects of memory asserted their importance.

Greg Dickinson and Carole Blair have, along with Brian Ott, attempted to triangulate the three terms: rhetoric, place, and memory. They wisely define rhetoric, not as a genre of discourse, indeed, not necessarily discursive at all, but rather as a set of theoretical stances and critical methodologies that offer a way of evaluating, understanding, and intervening in a broad range of human activities. However, despite this broad definition, Dickinson, Blair, and Ott still subscribe to many of the conventional understandings from the rhetorical canon. First, they privilege the public over the private. Therefore, they are concerned only with public memory places, which are desirable places that draw tourists and rhetorically construct a preferred identity for visitors. This approach is not unfounded in a field where public address has been a staple. While I do not intend to belittle or discount the importance of public places (indeed, my final analysis chapter concerns memorials in great detail), I contend that the spaces of everyday life and domestic life are equally memory-laden. Public memory places gain power from their fixity, Dickinson, Blair, and Ott argue, and from their material-ness that acts upon bodies. However, as Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift remind us, "places . . . are best thought of not so much as enduring sites but as moments of encounter, not so much as presents fixed in space and time, but as ariable events; twists and fluxes of interrelation."[84] In other words, places and cities are networks that cannot be sealed off; they are always in collision with other networks. Dickinson, Blair, and Ott do not address this. They argue, rightly, that memory places have their own histories –they do not just reflect the past, they accrue a past. While I applaud these theorists' interest in exploring artifacts that possess "materialness," and their careful consideration of the history of public memory scholarship, I take exception to their privileging of commemorative

structures over other kinds of sites, their lack of theorizing and problematizing "place," and finally, their use of the term public memory. Communities recovering from natural and manmade disaster offer a unique opportunity to analyze the deliberate refashioning of space, and the potentiality for everyday spaces to embody the functions of memory places. In the following dissertation, I work through some of these theoretical concerns and reverberate theories of place, space, memory, race, and national identity off of two cases.

A Map of the Dissertation

In chapter two, I explore methodological concerns of my study and commitments that guide my work. I combine aspects of ethnography, feminist methodology, textual criticism, and qualitative interviewing. I also reflect upon my own misgivings about the research process and how I negotiate the boundaries between insider and outsider, researcher and community member. In chapter three, I analyze the vernacular rhetorics employed by residents of Greensburg and the Lower Ninth Ward to justify their sustainability projects. I argue that community members apply populist argumentation to the environmental movement to assert that sustainability is appropriate for the common American. I explore three different topoi of populist environmentalism employed by residents and media professionals in the framing of Greensburg and the Lower Ninth.

From there, I delve into issues of space and race in these two communities. Chapter four draws from theories of critical geography and critical race studies to position spatial justice and environmental justice. I argue that social vulnerabilities are whitewashed in popular press coverage of the storms in favor of unthreatening narratives of geographic vulnerability. As evidence, I highlight cases where city officials appropriate discourses of environmental justice to justify discriminatory environmental and planning practices. I then compare media narratives of

Greensburg and the Lower Ninth Ward, arguing that race-averse discourses and strategies of normalized whiteness become all the more visible when contrasted with one another.

Then in chapter five, I explore the use of rhetorics of resilience by public officials. I argue that the stories of Greensburg and Katrina act as parables for the citizenry, arguing a specific vision and memory of the "good American." Specifically, I argue that resilience functions as an ideograph in the public imaginary and is molded by three topoi: opportunity, strength, and responsibility. I then link this American resiliency rhetoric to issues of national security and national identity, arguing that post-Katrina security discourses shift from an emphasis on preparedness to an emphasis on resilience in productive ways that suggest sustainability is a national security issue. The last analysis chapter, chapter six, tackles the politics of memorialization and collective memory. I analyze vernacular and official memorial artifacts in Greensburg and the Lower Ninth in conjunction with proposals for memorials and museums to be built in the future. I argue that the efficacy of commemorative structures in these two communities is directly linked to their perceived authenticity. Furthermore, memorial structures are potent sites of contestation over meaning, remembering, forgetting, and preferred narratives of the past, present, and future. I also make a case for the pervasive nature of memory in everyday life, arguing that the built world, especially in cases of radical contingency when all material artifacts are destroyed, is constantly shaped by and shaping collective or public memory. Finally, the conclusion chapter summarizes my arguments, explicates the significance of this study, and outlines limitations and avenues for future research. In the epilogue, I reflect upon the more recent disaster in Japan.

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[1] "The Tornado," *Greensburg*, Digital Media File, produced by Craig Peligian and Leonardo DiCaprio (Planet Green: 2008).

[2] US Census Bureau, "Annual Estimates of the Population for Counties of Louisiana: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2005," accessed April 1, 2011, www.census.gov/popest/counties/tables/CO-EST2006-01-22.xls.

[3] Barry Brummett, *Contemporary Apocalyptic Rhetoric* (New York: Praeger, 1991).

[4] While I will be drawing from larger discoures about greater New Orleans, the city's ward system and governmental structure is such that each neighborhood is in charge of it's own plan and fundraising for recovery. Therefore, there is not a lot of continuity or unity of the city as a whole. The Lower Ninth Ward has received considerably more attention than the rest of the city post-Katrina, and for good reason. First, the community had a number of social and economic problems before the storm that were only exacerbated afterward. Second, the attempts to evacuate the ward failed miserably, and a disproportionate number of residents died. Additionally, the neighborhood was one of the two places where the levees actually broke, resulting in a wall of water literally washing away many homes in the northernmost part of the neighborhood. Finally, it is the location of Brad Pitt's *Make it Right* project, the most high-profile attempt to build sustainably and also the most contentious.

[5] See Phaedra Pezzullo, *Toxic Tourism: Rhetorics of Pollution, Travel, and Environmental Justice* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2007); Tarla Rai Peterson, *Sharing the Earth: The Rhetoric of Sustainable Development* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1997).

[6] City of Greensburg Kansas + BNIM, "Greensburg Sustainable Comprehensive Master Plan," May 19, 2008, accessed January 23, 2009, http://www.greensburgks.org/recovery-planning/Greensburg%20Comprehensive%20Master%20Plan%2001-16-08%20DRAFT.pdf/view.

[7] Both presidents have visited both sites multiple times and delivered speeches lauding both projects. See, e.g., George W. Bush, "Commencement Address at Greensburg High School," Greensburg, KS, May 4, 2008, accessed May 1, 2011, http://www.presidentialrhetoric.com/speeches/05.04.08.html.

[8] "The Tornado," *Greensburg*.

[9] See David N. Bengston, David P. Fan, Patrick Reed, and Ashley Goldhor-Wilcock, "Rapid Issue Tracking: A Method for Taking the Pulse of the Public Discussion of Environmental Policy," *Environmental Communication* 3 (2009): 367-85; Danielle Endres, "Science and Public Participation: An Analysis of Public Scientific Argument in the Yucca Mountain Controversy," *Environmental Communication* 3 (2009): 49-75.

[10] See, e.g., Rocco DiPippo, "A Tale of Two Hurricanes," *Front Page Magazine*, September 6, 2005, http://www.leatherneck.com/forums/archive/index.php/t-21998.html.

[11] See, e.g., Sheryl Gay Stolberg, "Year After Katrina, Bush Still Fights for 9/11 Image," *New York Times*, August 28, 2006, http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/28/us/nationalspecial/28bush.html.

[12] In the original Action Plan, it was suggested that parts of the Lower Ninth Ward be bulldozed and not redeveloped in order to cut losses.

[13] Brian Thevenot, "National Guard Leaves New Orleans, Ends Crime-Fighting Help," NOLA.com, February 27, 2009, accessed June 1, 2011, http://www.nola.com/news/index.ssf/2009/02/national_guard_leaves_new_orle.html.

[14] US Census Bureau, "Annual Estimates."

[15] Ibid.

[16] See Robert Cox, *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2010).

[17] Google search conducted on August 10, 2010.

[18] Ramit Plushnick-Masti, "1895 Pennsylvania Steel Town Seeks Green Rebirth," *Tulsa World*, November 29, 2009, 3.

[19] David Williams, "'Green' Designs Urged for Quake Rebuild," *The Press,* October 2, 2010, 10.

[20] Robert Cox, "Nature's 'Crisis Disciplines': Does Environmental Communication Have an Ethical Duty?," *Environmental Communication: A Journal of Nature and Culture* 1 (2007): 5-20.

[21] Cox, "Nature's 'Crisis Disciplines'," 13.

[22] See Raymie E. McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis," *Communication Monographs* 56 (1989): 91-111; Stephen John Hartnett, "Communication, Social Justice, and Joyful Commitment," *Western Journal of Communication 74* (2010): 68-93.

[23] Secretary Napolitano, "A Resilient Nation," *The White House Blog*, April 15, 2010, http://m.whitehouse.gov/blog/2010/04/15/preview-a-resilient-nation.

[24] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1991).

[25] Ron Eyerman, *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 2.

[26] Lawrence Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005).

[27] United Nations, "Report of the World Commission on the Environment," General Assembly Resolution 42/187, December 11, 1987, accessed March 3, 2009, http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/42/ares42-187.htm.

[28] Greenwashing can be defined as the practice of dishonestly representing products or practices as environmentally friendly when they are not.

[29] Craig Waddell, "Defining Sustainable Development: A Case Study in Environmental Communication," in *Technical Communication, Deliberative Rhetoric, and Environmental Discourse: Connections and Directions*, ed. Nancy W. Coppola and Bill Karis (Stamford, CT: Ablex, 2000).

[30] Stephen P. Depoe, "Talking About the Earth: On the Growing Significance of Environmental Communication Studies," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 1 (1998): 435 – 448.

[31] Cox, "Nature's 'Crisis Disciplines.'"

[32] Cox, *Environmental Communication,* 37.

[33] Tema Milstein, "Environmental Communication Theories," in *Encyclopedia of Communication Theory*, eds. Stephen W. Littlejohn and Karen A. Foss (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009).

[34] See Kevin DeLuca, "The Frankfurt School and the Domination of Nature: New Grounds for Radical Environmentalism," in *Rethinking the Frankfurt School: Alternative Legacies of Cultural Critique*, trans. Jeffrey T. Nealon and Caren Irr (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002); William Leiss, *The Domination of Nature* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974); Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis," *Science* 155 (1967): 1203-1207.

[35] See William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness: or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in nature*, ed. William Cronon, 69-90 (New York: Norton, 1996); Carolyn Merchant, "Dominion over Nature," in *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (New York: Harper and Row, 1980); Kevin

Michael DeLuca and Lisa Slawter-Volkening, "Memories of the Tropics in Industrial Jungles: Constructing Nature, Contesting Nature," *Environmental Communication* 3 (2009): 1-24.

[36] See Marlia Banning, "When Poststructural Theory and Contemporary Politics Collide – the Vexed Case of Global Warming," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 6 (2009): 285-304; Lawrence J. Prelli and Terri S. Winters, "Rhetorical Features of Green Evangelicalism," *Environmental Communication* 3 (2009): 224-43; Travis Wagner, "Reframing Ecotage as Ecoterrorism: News and the Discourse of Fear," *Environmental Communication* 2 (2008): 25-39; Lisa D. Slawter, "Treehuggertv: Re-Visualizing Environmental Activism in the Post-Network Era," *Environmental Communication* 2 (2008): 212-228.; Dylan Wolfe, "The Video Rhizome: Taking Technology Seriously in the Meatrix," *Environmental Communication* 3 (2009): 317-334.

[37] See Endres, "Science and Public Participation"; Peterson, *Sharing the Earth;* Gail Tipa, "Exploring Indigenous Understandings of River Dynamics and River Flows: A Case from New Zealand," *Environmental Communication* 3 (2009): 95-120.

[38] Michael Calvin McGee, "The 'Ideograph': A Link Between Rhetoric and Ideology," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 66 (1980): 1-16.

[39] George Myerson and Yvonne Rydin, *The Language of the Environment: A New Rhetoric* (London: Routledge, 1996).

[40] Ibid., 97.

[41] Ibid., 100.

[42] Ibid., 106.

[43] For example, most of the contractors and builders in New Orleans made very good points about the hypocrisy of insisting on "building green" and then flying 30 volunteers across the country each week to hammer these green supplies down.

[44] Peterson, *Sharing the Earth.*

[45] Ibid., 2.

[46] Ibid., 3.

[47] Ibid., 2.

[48] Ibid., 185.

[49] Sharon McKenzie Stevens, "Activist Rhetoric and the Struggle for Meaning: The Case of 'Sustainability' in the Reticulate Public Sphere," *Rhetoric Review 25* (2006): 299.

[50] Ibid.

[51] United Nations, "Millenium Development Goals," accessed March 3, 2011, http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/goals/index.htm.

[52] Cindy Spurlock, "Performing and Sustaining (Agri)Culture and Place: The Cultivation of Environmental Subjectivity on the Piedmont Farm Tour," *Text and Performance Quarterly 29* (2009): 5-21.

[53] Myerson and Rydin, *The Language of the Environment*.

[54] Cox, *Environmental Communication*.

[55] Pezzullo, *Toxic Tours*; Spurlock, "Performing and Sustaining."

[56] Michael Calvin McGee, "A Materialist's Conception of Rhetoric" in Raymie McKerrow, ed., *Explorations in Rhetoric: Essays in Honor of Douglas Ehninger* (Glenview, IL: Scott-Foresman, 1989), 25.

[57] Raymie E. McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric in a Postmodern World," *Quarterly Journal of Speech 77* (1991): 67-78.

[58] John Ackerman, "The Space for Rhetoric in Everyday Life," in M. Nystrant and J. Duffy, eds., *Towards a Rhetoric of Everyday Life: New Directions in Research on Writing, Text, and Discourse* (Madison, WS: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 85.

[59] John M. Ackerman and David J. Coogan, eds., *The Public Work of Rhetoric: Citizen-Scholars and Civic Engagement* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2010).

[60] There is a wealth of theories about space and place, almost exclusively outside of communication literature that I have written about elsewhere. As Nothstine, Blair, and Copeland rightly assert, theoretical abstractions are limiting and directing, which can make it more difficult for a critic to exercise imagination, judgment, and intuition. See William Nothstine, Carole Blair, and Gary Copeland, "Professionalism and the Eclipse of Critical Invention," in *Critical Questions: Invention, Creativity, and the Criticism of Discourse and Media* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1994); For a detailed literature review of spatial theory, see Katherine M. Cruger, "Towards Trialectic Rhetorical Analysis: Henri Lefebvre, New Urbanism, and the Contradictions of Spatial Representation and Practice at 'Sojourn'," under review.

[61] Pezzullo, *Toxic Tourism*.

[62] Kenneth Zagacki and Victoria Gallagher, "Rhetoric and Materiality in the Museum Park at the North Caroline Museum of Art," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 95 (2009): 171 – 191.

[63] See Carol Blair and Neil Michel, "Commemorating the Theme Park Zone: Reading the Astronaut's Memorial" in *At the Intersection: Cultural Studies and Rhetorical Studies*, ed. T. Rosteck (New York: Guilford, 1999); Carole Blair and Neil Michel, "The Rushmore Effect: Ethos and National Collective Identity," in *The Ethos of Rhetoric,* ed. M. J. Hyde. (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2004); Greg Dickinson, "Memories for Sale: Nostalgia and the Construction of Identity in Old Pasadena," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 83 (1997): 1-27; Greg Dickinson, "Joe's Rhetoric: Finding Authenticity at Starbucks," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly 32* (2002): 5-27; Greg Dickinson, Brian Ott, and Eric Aoki, "Memory and Myth at the Buffalo Bill Museum," *Western Journal of Communication 69* (2005): 85–108.

[64] Blair and Michel, "The Rushmore Effect."

[65] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

[66] Blair and Michel, "Commemorating."

[67] See Dickinson, "Memories for Sale"; Dickinson "Joe's Rhetoric."

[68] Dickinson, "Memories for Sale," 1.

[69] Greg Dickinson, Carole Blair, and Brian L. Ott, *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010).

[70] Ibid., 50.

[71] Ibid., 53.

[72] See Kendall Phillips, *Framing Public Memory* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004); Elizabethada A. Wright, "Rhetorical Spaces and Memorial Places: The Cemetery as a Rhetorical Memory Place/Space," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly 35* (2005): 51–81; Dickinson, Blair, and Ott, *Places of Public Memory*.

[73] Cicero, *Rhetorica Ad Herrenium*, trans. Harry Caplan (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

[74] Phillips, *Framing Public Memory*, 2.

[75] Carole Blair, "Contemporary United States Memorial Sites as Exemplars of Rhetoric's Materiality," in *Rhetorical Bodies*, eds. Jack Selzer and Sharon Crowley (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press), 46.

[76] Wright, "Rhetorical Spaces," 52.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Dickinson, "Memories for Sale"; Dickinson, "Joe's Rhetoric."

[79] Aaron Hess, "In Digital Remembrance: Vernacular Memory and the Rhetorical Construction of Web Memorials," *Media, Culture & Society 29* (2007): 812-830.

[80] Maurice Hablwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

[81] Edward Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000).

[82] Stephen Browne, "Reading, Rhetoric and the Texture of Public Memory," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81 (1995), 248.

[83] Charles E. Morris III, "Lincoln and the Politics of Queer Memory," in *Framing Public Memory* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 90.

[84] Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift, *Cities: Reimagining the Urban* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, Inc., 2002), 30.

Chapter 2

In Place and Out of Place in Greensburg and the Lower Ninth:

A Discussion of Method

First Impressions

When I landed at the New Orleans International Airport, it was sticky and humid, and I had absolutely no idea what I was getting myself into. The beginning of fieldwork (in my limited experience) is always fraught with conflicting emotions: fear, excitement, and anxiety about forging new relationships and gaining a sense of place within new local dynamics. On a whim, I signed up online to volunteer for six weeks of my summer with a volunteer organization who aids Ninth Ward residents in rebuilding their homes. The volunteer application worksheet asked me to rank my expertise on a scale of one to ten at an array of different tasks, such as electrical work (I put one, but wished zero was an option as I imagined electrocuting myself while installing a doorbell), tiling (I consider myself a solid four from many summers spent helping neighbors and friends with many ill-conceived DIY projects), and painting (I put a nine to appear modest) so they could place me according to my skill level. During my stay, I would live and work in the volunteer house in the Ninth Ward with anywhere from ten to thirty strangers. As I hired a cab to take me to the volunteer house from the airport, I could not help but worry that everyone would be more skilled than I was, or worse: that they would be extremely religious and would ostracize me for my obvious liberal leanings. The cab driver was chatty, and acted concerned that I was going to the Ninth Ward by myself. My increasing anxiety was put on hold temporarily, however, as the cab's engine began smoking and we were forced to pull over onto the shoulder of the freeway. "Don't worry," my cab driver assured me, "I'll call my cousin and he'll come pick us up." As a New Yorker who has been through a fair share of cab accidents, I

wondered why he did not call dispatch or roadside assistance. True to his word, however, ten minutes later, an ancient Geo Prism pulled up. Duct tape held the right side mirror to the window and my cabbie's cousin eagerly introduced himself and his girlfriend (also in the car.) He offered me some Hurricane, served out of a gallon bucket into a paper cup, and threw my backpack into the backseat where the cabbie and I squeezed together as best we could.[1]

Ten minutes later we hit another snag. With the Claiborne bridge out of service for months, there was only one way in and out of the Ninth Ward: the St. Claude drawbridge. However, the bridge was raised to allow tugboats and barges to move through the industrial canal. Stuck indefinitely, we chatted about Colorado, the rain, and how the cabbie's cousin wanted to get into the taxi business and maybe I would be a reference. A full forty minutes later, the bridge came down and we made our way into the Ward. A few fried chicken spots, liquor stores, and one auto repair shop were the only open businesses on St. Claude, the main drag through the neighborhood. My two cabbies could not find the address we were looking for (turns out that the street is only a block long) and we pulled over -- and directly onto -- the grassy median to ask two elderly men sitting in lawn chairs drinking forties for directions. Right away they asked me if I wanted a beer and enthusiastically welcomed me to the neighborhood. At this point I was about an hour late, and I politely declined. I finally made it to the volunteer house in a state of culture shock, but excited about what the next six weeks would hold. Sure enough, it was one of the best experiences of my life and returning to the "real world" at the end of the summer was astoundingly difficult.

My first experiences of Greensburg were quite different. For the last two hours of the car trip, a faint aroma of cow hung in the air. My fellow travelers and I pulled into our hotel a bit after midnight but I could not actually see any buildings in the dark at all. Again, I wondered

what I had gotten myself into, but this time because I worried there were not yet any structures erected in Greensburg. The next morning I wandered down to Main street, occupied by only the alarmingly named "Kook's Meats" deli, a Quickshop gas station and corner store, and a little coffee shop that had just opened in the "Sun Chips Business Incubator." Despite the cold and the early hour, workers were busily laboring on dozens of lots around town; backup warnings and the vibration of generators comprised the soundtrack that punctuated my visit.

I have never been comfortable striking up conversations with strangers; less so when asking intrusive questions or initiating interviews. This was just my scouting visit, I told myself, I did not need to talk to people yet. The residents of Greensburg, however, had a different idea. At the only eating establishment other than the mysterious meat shop, servers and bussers all asked where I was from and why I was in town. "Hey blue coat," someone shouted out of a passing pickup truck, referring to my bright blue pea coat, "you're not from around here are you?" The shout out was not exactly a cat call, nor was it entirely unassuming. No one was rude or offensive, just extremely curious. As it turned out, I did not have to ask questions at all; residents eagerly volunteered information about how long they lived in Greensburg, where their house was located if I wanted to take a look, and when their shop would reopen if I needed some yarn/picture frames/sunglasses in the future. Although this was just a quick stop as part of a longer road trip with friends, I liked the friendly little town and looked forward to returning later that year to conduct dissertation research and witness the progress made during my six month absence.

My research is inspired by two passions: environmental justice and a fascination with urban design and architecture. Since I first began studying rhetoric as a master's student, applying a rhetorical framing and vocabulary to the built world seemed the obvious path for me.

I began by studying local neighborhood design, and was especially interested in development projects that identified (and justified) themselves as "green" or "sustainable." Often, I was struck by the greenwashing practices that went on in real estate and the identity work that living in a community labeled as "green" did for residents. I am also an advocate for environmental justice, and volunteer with Habitat for Humanity and other organizations to help provide safe, nontoxic, and affordable housing to those who need it. I firmly believe that the research we do as scholars should emerge from our own experiences and commitments, and this project is a perfect example of such research. Furthermore, my work is unabashedly political and normative – the job of the contemporary critic, I argue, is not to offer objective description, but to unmask power relations, offer points of intervention, and produce work to aid public officials and the citizenry in making informed and ethical choices. In this way, I join Robbie Cox, Phaedra Pezzullo, and other scholars who work to show how environmental decision making entails profound personal and public consequences. This process, is not, however without ethical entailments of its own and demands both self reflexivity and sensitivity to the often tangled positionalities of myself and others.

Earlier in the dissertation process, I knew I wanted to study Greensburg, but had no intention of studying New Orleans in comparison. A friend and fellow graduate student who worked in with the Department of Energy (DOE) first told me about the Kansan town, and then it seemed like I could not watch television, browse the internet, or strike up a conversation without someone mentioning Greensburg and what the town residents were trying to accomplish. It was only after living in the Lower Ninth Ward for over a month and talking with its residents and other volunteers that it became clear my study required the contrast between two cases. People in the Ninth Ward were sometimes openly hostile towards sustainability projects in their

neighborhood, especially the *Make it Right* homes across the canal. Certainly, it was clear during my visit that, despite the fact that the Ninth Ward in many ways held loftier goals when it came to sustainability and had been working longer to achieve those goals, far less progress had been made in New Orleans than in Greensburg. Later that month, when I was conducting fieldwork in Greensburg, many residents compared themselves to New Orleans without any leading from me, expressing ambivalence, and perhaps some guilt, about their belief that Kansas was treated well partially to make up for what happened along the Gulf Coast two years earlier. It was then that I made the deliberate decision to compare the two sites. And indeed, George Marcus argues that longstanding ethnographic practices of single-sited, long-term studies must be adapted for the more complex objects of study found in contemporary culture, and asserts the importance of multi-sited ethnographies for the purpose of interdisciplinary and intertextual comparison.[2]

Ethnographically-Informed Rhetorical Criticism

In this dissertation, I map out both material and symbolic rhetorical strategies that these two communities use to transform themselves and assess the effectiveness of these strategies. I draw on and foreground multiple voices, and put those voices in conversation with one another. Mechling and Mechling insist that rhetoricians must approach a text critically with a "pragmatic attitude," so that they might expose competing and contradictory narratives in real world, problem-oriented discourse.[3] Therefore, one of my goals listed in chapter one is to extrapolate and understand contradictory narratives of rebuilding green. Taking this a step further, I believe that examining discourse alone is not enough. In the words of Ralph Cintron, the "a full mobilization of the discipline of rhetoric, if it is to serve/disturb anthropology, entails more than a rhetorical examination of the text. Such a mobilization would also see rhetoric operating outside of the text, for instance, in the helter–skelter of fieldwork."[4] In this study I analyze

vernacular discourses (milled through participant observation, interviewing, and other ethnographic methods), planning documents, maps, presidential speeches (a more traditional text for rhetorical critics), media coverage, pop culture artifacts (such as reality TV shows, documentaries, and HBO dramas), and the physical space of the two communities.

The materiality of the built communities, I argue, offers additional McGeean textual fragments that must be considered for a complete and responsible rhetorical analysis.[5] McGee argues that modern critics can understand "whole" texts more completely by understanding the relationship between sources, culture, and influences. Furthermore, he rejects the arbitrary separation of text and context, because discourse ceases to be what it is whenever parts of it are taken "out of context." One is no longer dealing with discourse as it appears in the world if one removes context or only deals with one portion of it, McGee insists. It is important for my project, therefore, to analyze the interplay between material and discursive, between vernacular and official. How, for example, did the discourse surrounding Hurricane Katrina in the national arena have material consequences in local redevelopment policy, federal resource allocation, national security initiatives, and the daily realities of Lower Ninth Ward residents? In a similar vein, Marlia Banning argues that the critical project should, through a series of cases, trace how discourses and material policy that *appear* to be disparate are really linked, interdependent, and effective in shifting the material and discursive landscape of the nation.[6] Taking this orientation toward text, I marry ethnographic research methods with more traditional rhetorical criticism to explore two cases in detail: The Lower Ninth Ward in New Orleans, and Greensburg, KS.

Cintron acknowledges that there are many similarities between critical rhetoric and critical ethnography; most markedly, that they both work to unmask the underlying ideology of language use and reveal discourses of power.[7] "Recognizing that power relations and knowledge

are interconnected," Jim Thomas shares this commitment with Cintron, arguing that, "critical ethnography challenges the conventional ideological images inherent in all research by investigating the possibility of alternative meanings."[8] Nothstine, Blair, and Copeland assert that the push toward disciplinarity as isolation, due largely to our field's insecurity, harmfully quarantines academic experience from contamination by knowledge or experience from outside the discipline.[9] In contrast to this model, Stephen Hartnett argues, we need to produce work that is morally clear, elegantly written, and that demonstrates our central roles as rhetorical scholars in improving civic life.[10] This study aims to be such a project, a move away from implied politics and toward engaged politics, a move away from strict disciplinarity and toward a more complex and nuanced understanding of phenomena. According to Dwight Conquergood, "the choice is no longer between pure and applied research. Instead, we must choose between research that is engaged or complicit . . . our choice is to stand alongside or against domination, but not outside, above, or beyond it."[11] By working closely with nonprofit organizations at both of my sites and engaging in ethnographic participant observation, I believe my study answers this call for engaged, critical research.

Conquergood reflects on the intersection of rhetoric, ethnography, and performance, and reminds us that rhetoricians can learn from ethnographers that some of our key concepts (such as logic, argument, or reason) are culturally constructed.[12] Furthermore, he argues that ethnographers share with the Sophists a predilection for juxtaposing and manipulating realities. Conquergood offers recommendations for how communication scholars broadly and rhetoricians more specifically might rethink ethnography.[13] He highlights the need for embodied research and rhetorical reflexivity. Conquergood calls for an end of "fetishizing texts" because cultural performances are not just reflections of culture; they might be "active agencies of change," a

sentiment that resonates with Hauser's call to engage everyday communicative exchanges.[14] I

want to emphasize, however, that avoiding the "fetishizing" of texts does not mean ignoring

them; one of the skills a rhetorician brings to the critical project is the ability to read a text

closely and unmask multiple and hidden meanings. Instead, I seek to bring official and pop

culture texts into conversation with the quotidian, the built world, and observation of cultural

performances.

Although these cultural performances or vernacular discourses can be difficult to access,

ethnographic fieldwork offers an excellent method for obtaining fragments of a vernacular text

for rhetorical analysis.[15] erin underwood has recently made a case for "rhetorical ethnography," a

method embracing what she feels are constructive aspects of rhetoric and ethnography "while

seeking to avoid the authoritarian nature with which rhetoric has historically been associated and

the subjective bias with which early ethnography was often charged."[16] underwood highlights the

potential for rhetorical ethnography to gain access to the vernacular texts otherwise not

accessible for rhetoricians and to analyze such texts formally through a rhetorical framework.

Since both rhetoricians and ethnographers have referred to their works as "bricolage," it makes

sense that the two approaches should be linked, as rhetorical critics scramble to compile as many

pieces of the puzzle as they can. underwood embraces ethnography as a way to cultivate a

vernacular text for traditional rhetorical analysis of tropes, metaphors, and symbols. While I do

engage in ethnographic fieldwork like underwood, Cintron, Pezzullo, and many others as a

supplement to my textual criticism, it should be mentioned that, for many scholars (especially

those in anthropology or sociology), "true ethnography" requires far more field work that I am

equipped to undertake. Conquergood and Cintron, for example, spend years in their fieldsites,

not weeks. One way to measure ethnography is the level to which a study achieves both

proximity and longevity, meaning that ethnographic researchers spend a minimum of one year immersed in their site. Since my or underwood's work does not meet this requirement, I take exception to her calling it "rhetorical ethnography." We are employing ethnographic methods, but do not produce an ethnography as our end product. Therefore, I call my method ethnographically – informed rhetorical criticism, and I still heavily engage the symbolic texts of Greensburg and the Lower Ninth Ward. I do not claim complete or absolute knowledge of a place, culture, or people, although there are few ethnographers who would claim that either.[17] Instead, I claim that visiting a site and speaking with residents, experiencing the built reality of a community – especially when one is exploring issues of community development, environmental justice, and rebuilding post-disaster as I am – is an essential addition to the rhetorical critical project. Ethnography, as rhetoric, acts as a heuristic tool, that is it opens up ways of looking at social interaction and discourses in particular settings.[18]

Influences from Feminist Rhetoric, Feminist Ethnography, and Feminist Geography

Further support for ethnographic fieldwork and interdisciplinarity in rhetorical criticism can be found in feminist rhetorical methodologies. For example, in *Rhetorica in Motion*, a recent edited volume that explores work across disciplines or "at the edge of multiple disciplines" and what that means for method, one of the unifying themes throughout the chapters is emphasis on movement, or motion as a way of knowing.[19] "Journey," "fluidity," and "pathway" metaphors abound as scholar after scholar attempt to pin down their research process.[20] Ilene Crawford, for example, describes her research as a "collection of memories" and "routes through the material space of Vietnam."[21] Crawford makes a few points implicitly that need to be made more explicit about the nature of feminist ethnographic work and spatial awareness.

First, she notes that disorientation in a new space was key in shaping her perspective as a researcher. Confusion, memory, and imagination, or how Crawford's "physical and emotional location affected what [she] could see and comprehend intellectually" was a cue to reconceptualize and be open about her positionality in her research.[22] Similarly, Lila Abu-Lughod, a feminist anthropologist who conducted fieldwork in the western desert of Egypt for almost two years, reflects thoughtfully on the productive displacement she felt as a western, feminist woman living in a Bedouin society.[23] For example, her Arab father insists on accompanying her to the research site so she would not be seen as such a suspicious outsider. In such a conservative tribal group, he realized, a woman traveling alone would be assumed to have alienated her family, and therefore be given no respect. Abu-Lughod reflects on feeling "peripheral" at first, out of place and unsure of how to behave or how to present the Arab half of her heritage and deny the Western half.[24] It was this unwelcome experience, however, that forced Abu-Lughod to interrogate cultural boundaries and spatial practices.

Second, whether studying physical spaces or spaces in the sense of *topoi,* Crawford makes the point that an overarching research question for rhetoricians should be, "how are spatial meanings established? Who has the power to make places of spaces . . . what's at stake?"[25] Emphasis on power and uncovering power relations is a focus that feminist scholarship shares with critical scholarship. Feminism is a difficult word to define, and there are hundreds of different feminisms theorized and practiced in the field of rhetoric and beyond. For me, feminism is a politics and a range of theories directed at changing existing power relations between the oppressed and the oppressor, whether they be men and women, white and black, or gay and straight.[26] The goal of feminism is *emancipation*, and as bell hooks notes, even members of the

dominant culture require emancipating from the strict and limiting roles imposed upon them by the hegemony.[27]

As de Certeau reminds us, the reappropriation or reclamation of space can be an emancipatory project.[28] Users of space are not as powerless as one might think, de Certeau insists, and may employ tactics or weapons of the weak in the space of the other. Edward Soja similarly argues that spatial power relations should always be foregrounded. He writes, "whatever your interests may be, they can be significantly advanced by adopting a critical spatial perspective."[29] Spatial thinking in conjunction with social justice projects, he argues, gives us the potential to extend our practical and discipline-specific knowledge into effective and libratory action that can change the world.[30]By adopting this orientation to space, the critic is constantly reminded that strategic efforts have material consequences, that space is more than just a backdrop for discourse, and that everyday users of space possess important insight.

Third, Crawford discusses the process for compiling a text in a useful way. Although she does not cite McGee, Crawford similarly pulls from many different "fragments" to produce the text to be analyzed.[31] She "interweaves" her own narratives with those of her subjects, along with more fragmented bits and pieces; it is a text that "reflects the silences and gaps produced" and born from cultural trauma.[32] Although she does not use the word "ethnography," Crawford's project involves onsite field research, and incorporating those embodied experiences into a complex text made of many fragments.

Pamela Sangar notes that "no single scholar, no single project can or should claim to have the final articulation of 'feminist ethnography,'" but most are marked by a few common characteristics that reflect the commitments Crawford has made to feminist research.[33] Identifying our biases, not exploiting those we study, an emphasis on revealing power, and

rejection of objectivity in favor of reflexivity are all pillars of feminist ethnography, according to

Sangar. Perhaps the most important characteristic, however, is polyvocality, or the possibility of

allowing many voices to speak in the text. This process can take many different forms, from

trying to ensure that subjects are "heard" through the text (though still via the researcher) to

using subject's own words, to even coauthoring a text with a research participant. One of my

goals as a researcher is to make the project as polyvocal and I am able by including the words of

residents and volunteers and offering as complex and responsible representation of my texts as I

can in my role as a critic. I believe that the purpose of rhetorical criticism is to "open up"

rhetorical practices and texts to the understanding of a wider and not exclusively academic

audience.[34] In the words of Sonja Foss, "one purpose of rhetorical criticism is to understand a

rhetorical artifact better and, consequently, to use that understanding to help others appreciate it

or to change some aspect of the society that generated the rhetorical artifact."[35] Pete Simonson

explores his own embodied experiences as an out-of-state volunteer, a "mercurian" rhetorician

and border-crosser.[36] Describing himself as "a gringo volunteer from the north working the

rhetorical grassroots," Simonson documents his attempts at a type of sophistry, using McGee's

"performative criticism" as a way to apply his scholarly expertise for social change – in this case,

in the service of Barack Obama's presidential campaign.[37] Reflecting on the academy, Simonson

writes:

> It's also not hard to find moods where that scholarship seems dull and lifeless, dominated
> as it is by analysis of disembodied texts and armchair theorizing. I am looking for some-
> thing different, based on making contact with audiences and interlocutors outside the
> academy, and feeling the force of rhetoric as an embodied activity manifest in particular
> cultural scenes.[38]

I share Simonson's search for something different, the desire to literally take to the streets, and

set off to find it last summer. My actions resulted in the cultivation of hundreds of different

textual fragments and material experiences for analysis. Before I discuss data collection methods in more detail, however, I must flesh out my case for spatially-aware rhetorical criticism.

Henri Lefebvre and the Social Production of Space

Arguably the most comprehensive and thorough theory of space offered to date, French sociologist Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (originally *La Production de L'Espace*) is a work at once historical, philosophical, neo-Marxist, and pragmatic.[39] Lefebvre attacks what he calls *abstract space,* or the space of capitalism, for its emphasis on accumulation and consumption, chastising scholars interested in space for limiting their analyses to "an inventory of things in space" or discourse about space, ignoring the history of space and the lived reality of its inhabitants.[40] His is a valid critique, and one that this study attempts to remedy. Space is social, Lefebvre asserts, and in a conceptual paradox, it both produces and is produced by social action. Skeptical of dyads because they tend to essentialize and "boil down to oppositions, contrasts, or antagonisms," Lefebvre puts forth a conceptual triad useful for rhetoricians trying to understand the multiple dimensions of social space that can coexist in one location consisting of representations of space, spatial practice, and representational spaces.[41]

First, Lefebvre presents *spatial practice*. Lefebvre argues that, under neocapitalism, spatial practice "embodies a close association, within perceived space, between daily reality (daily routine) and urban reality (the routes and networks which link up the places set aside for work, 'private' life, and leisure."[42] In other words, spatial practice comprises bodies acting in space, or embodied space. Modern spatial practice should be defined, he asserts, by a tenant in a government-subsidized high rise housing project, since the competence and performance of every society member must be evaluated empirically.[43] Spatial practice is also a dialectic for Lefebvre, demonstrating a tension between more individualized everyday routines and the larger

networks and routes that urge bodies to act in certain ways. Lefebvre is not an idealist - spatial practice is not free of constraints; it assures competence and cohesion, but he is careful to clarify that it is by no means coherent, logical, or worked out ahead of time. Like all social practice, Lefebvre argues that "spatial practice is lived directly before it is conceptualized; but the speculative primacy of the conceived over the lived causes practice to disappear along with life."[44] Therefore, in this study I seek to account for the spatial practices in Greensburg and the Lower Ninth Ward in addition to formal and informal texts about the two communities.

The second element of Lefebvre's conceptual triad is *representations of space*. This realm represents the conceptualized space of architects, planners, social engineers, and urbanists. It is the space of blueprints and models, and, at least in the current capitalist system, is the dominant space, meaning that when we think about space, we conceptualize it this way, with a system of signs and symbols. If spatial practice is embodied space, representations of space are conceived space. To account for conceived space, I explore a myriad of different planning documents.

Finally, there are *Representational Spaces*. In secondary literature, representational space is often seen as our only hope of salvation, but Lefebvre is more ambivalent about it than scholars often interpret.[45] Scholars using secondary literature focus on explaining representational spaces as "space as directly *lived*" without finishing Lefebvre's phrase, which reads "through its associated images and symbols."[46] Lefebvre explains that representational space is the space of inhabitants, but also maintains that it is the space of writers and philosophers who describe, and "aspire to do no more than describe."[47] He does submit that representational space is lived, but he tempers this observation with the claim that it is only experienced passively. Lefebvre refers more than once to representational space as "space of

imagination." The main difference between representations of space and representational space, for Lefebvre, was emphasis on consistency. Ultimately, representations of space achieve intervention through construction – the buildings are built, the plans carried out, the designs realized. Representational spaces, by contrast, need to obey no rules of consistency or cohesion. Although they are also symbolic, they are "redolent with imagery" and have their source in history – a dialectic between larger collective histories as well as individual histories.[48] In essence, they are rife with memory politics. Representational spaces, by contrast to representations of space, only produce symbolic works. These symbolic works, be they mediated discourses, poems, or televised dramas, are also farmed to create a text suitable for criticism.

Lefebvre wants scholars and practitioners to intervene in the built environment; he wants to start with an understanding of spatial practice and ultimately achieve balance between the three axes by changing the way we think about and interact with space in our scholarship as well as our everyday lives. For the rhetorical critic, the triad is a tool for talking about the ever-present tensions between understandings of space by community members, architects and planners, and everyday embodied practice in those spaces. It can also suggest a point of intervention for restoring this balance between the three axes and bringing the corporeal, the embodied, back into rhetorical criticism of the material world.

Data Collection

Textual Analysis

Both of my cases received a large amount of media attention. In the case of Greensburg, this attention mostly took the form of feel-good pieces about "Greensburg Rising," and the strength of one small town in the face of adversity. CBS news, for example, spent a week at Greensburg during the one-year anniversary of the tornado, and sponsored a special concert

series to highlight how far the town had come. In New Orleans, however, the narrative was much different. Rioting, looting, starvation, the mistreatment of the elderly, and the incompetence of many branches of government, were all elements of the media blitz following Katrina.[49] Multiple newspaper articles on the Gulf Coast ran in 2010, documenting how far the city still had to go, and how recovery efforts are crippled by a new crisis: the BP oil spill.[50] In this study, I analyze print media stories and television spots on each of the communities. This process allows me to see how outsiders and media professionals frame disaster and recovery stories for consumers. While there is far too much information for me to engage in close textual analysis of all of it, I follow the common rule of qualitative research that dictates I continue to explore new texts until the themes and narratives I find become repetitive and no new information can be gained.[51] I have accumulated and archived more than 1000 media texts. Readers may see Appendix E for a list of database searches conducted.

I am also interested in how each of these communities frames themselves--for one another as well as for outsiders. I interrogate each city's web presence and the promotional materials they have created for tourists as well as potential corporate sponsors. Greensburg has a city website. Conversely, New Orleans does not have a united city website, but many of the different wards have their own web presence. For example, the Holy Cross Neighborhood Association updates their site regularly. Following Cintron, I concentrate on the proliferation of images and representations of sustainability that circulate throughout Greensburg and the Lower Ninth Ward, and I explore what might structure the perceived attractiveness or unattractiveness of a given representation for a particular person. Over the course of my fieldwork, I compiled a dozen pamphlets, knick-knacks, and souvenirs for analysis.

Additionally, each community created a plan for rebuilding their town or neighborhood sustainably. Greensburg's plan comprised one 151-page master document. It detailed the ins and outs of a multi-staged, multiyear, rebuild that would result in a new Greensburg, a paragon of green living and the Mecca for anyone else who wanted to green their lives. Unsurprisingly, in New Orleans, such consensus could never be reached. Different organizations and commissions each developed their own plans, with the Mayor encouraging individual wards and neighborhoods to engage in their own planning and rebuilding efforts, as city-sponsored help would be slow to arrive. I interrogate each of these plans, three official documents in total.

Interviewing

Following Hauser, who encourages critics to embrace the vernacular, or the rhetoric of the everyday, I believe a critic should "go beyond the text of formal discourse and beyond a critical reading of the text to discover how it was understood and responded to by those who were paying attention and responding to what was being communicated."[52] The interplay between official and vernacular is key to critical understanding, and this study seeks to map how discourses at the macro level (presidential speeches, media specials) link to or contradict micro level discourses (town hall meetings, everyday conversation), and how these different levels of discourse further affect and are affected by the built world. As Reinharz explains, "interviewing offers researchers access to people's ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words rather than in the words of the researcher."[53] Incorporating interviews is way of assuring my research achieve the feminist goal of polyvocality. For my purposes, informal interviewing practices proved most effective because the "official" nature of formal interviews was not appealing to my participants. In Greensburg, for example, there is a growing fatigue from news reporters, FEMA officials, documentary film crews, and visitors asking questions over and over about residents'

personal tragedy. I had much better luck letting citizens volunteer information or willingly and conversationally offer their personal narrative than I did asking for it directly. The exception, of course, were people who worked in this capacity (public relations representatives for nonprofits, for example). One man I met at the local antique store, for instance, had a business card that read, "Speaks of the Greensburg Tornado." He was not opposed to being audio recorded while he spoke, but was also less interested in answering specific questions than he was in performing his prepared speech about his town. Over the course of my research, I grew close with this man, and he confided more interesting (or dangerous) information. However, this information was told to me as a friend; the conversation developed organically, and I do not believe it would have come to light via interview guide.

Participant Observation

Finally, there is an aspect of participant observation to my research project. I spent a total of six weeks volunteering in New Orleans, at a not-for-profit organization that used volunteer labor to rebuild the homes of families in the Lower Ninth Ward who otherwise could not afford to return to the neighborhood. I saw firsthand the debate about spending thousands of dollars more on "green" materials when it meant that the family would have to sacrifice appliances or furniture for their home. Although I was only there short while, I was made to feel like the Lower Ninth was *my* neighborhood. I went to barbecues with residents, watched the Mississippi River at nighttime gatherings at the levee, and actively listened to people. In Greensburg, my preliminary participant observation was briefer. Here too, I volunteered with a not-for-profit organization, but I was only there for one week. Even in such a short time, community members embraced me, invited me to town hall meetings, asked me to stay in their home, and eagerly listened to my stories of New Orleans and my experiences as a researcher and student. In both

cases, I maintain contact with the friends I have made; friends that really feel more like family than anything else. I plan on revisiting both sites over the course of the coming years to continue fieldwork as time and budget allows.

Performing The Volunteer/Tourist/Researcher/Insider Identities

One of the goals of qualitative research is to study things in their natural setting and make sense of phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.[54] Qualitative researchers, especially those who embrace feminist or critical theory, view research as a multi-method and interactive process shaped by the positionality of the researcher as well as the subjects.[55] Therefore, researchers should monitor their own perspectives in regard to personal experiences they gather and should be explicitly accountable for their investment in their work. While the encounter between researcher and host should not be the sole object of inquiry, Abu-Lughod argues, "to ignore the encounter not only denies the power of such factors as personality, social location in the community, intimacy of contact, and luck (not to mention theoretical orientation and self-conscious methodology) to shape fieldwork and its product but also perpetuates the conventional fictions of objectivity and omniscience that mark the ethnographic genre."[56] While the cultural differences I encountered at my two sites were not as drastic as those which Abu-Lughod explores in her work with the Bedouin, my struggles with positionality still warrant discussion.

First, I wrestled with a complex stew of emotions, some of them negative and most of them quite powerful. I am angry, and this anger can seep through my work. I am angry that in the contemporary world, communities are still so vulnerable to natural disaster. I am angry, further, that in the case of Hurricane Katrina, a vast majority of the disaster was preventable, and not really "natural" at all. I am angry that actuarial reasoning and cost-benefit analysis coupled with

neoliberal political and economic policy leaves those with the least ability to recover from catastrophe on their own with the least government help. I am not angry at the people of Greensburg Kansas -- who dealt with a harrowing disaster with caring, intelligence, and bravery, and who actively pass on the kindness they received from volunteers by helping other stricken communities rebuild – but I am angry that insurance companies and FEMA performed better in Greensburg largely because of the public reaction to their gross and disastrous mismanagement of Katrina two years before. I am angry that overwhelming evidence indicates that much of the impetus for Katrina's disaster was a result of institutional discrimination against the socially vulnerable and based upon race and class.

Conversely, I am extremely hopeful, and I certainly aim to infuse my writing with that hope as well. While the *reason* for improved government performance in Greensburg is frustrating, any improvement in disaster mitigation is a positive development. I am extremely hopeful that these two disparate communities made the choice to incorporate sustainability into their redevelopment efforts, something that is not easy to accomplish and will take time. In both cases, I am also extremely hopeful that the voices of the people were enthusiastically taken into consideration in planning efforts, not just the wishes of big developers. In fact, in the case of the Lower Ninth Ward, resident outpourings prevented the neighborhood from being bulldozed and turned into an industrial park or "open space." I am excited and hopeful that each of these cases raise awareness about both green building and about the fight for environmental justice. I clearly and explicitly state my position because there is no way I can be objective about these two cases. What I do strive to be, however, is fair, and I hope to include as many voices as I can and treat each voice with respect, even when I vehemently disagree.

In addition to my political orientation, I should also mention my material positionality. I have always had the ability to pass in different social and cultural groups. I learned this fluidity as a young teenager when I was uniformly accepted by the dishwashers and cooks in the restaurant where I worked. Other white girls and others who worked "front of the house" were considered prissy and not worth speaking to, but I quickly learned I could amend the way I spoke to make other people comfortable around me. I have used this ability throughout my live to negotiate the boundaries between my different friends, acquaintances, and identities. I would like to think it is not my personality that is so changeable, but the packaging I can use (working class, academic, southern, party-girl, New Yorker) to make an initial connection with people who are markedly different from myself. The ability to pass was a skill I employed in both Greensburg and the Lower Ninth, though I am not entirely comfortable with that admission. However, as anyone engaging in fieldwork is well aware, gaining access is an essential first step. Cintron parlays his ability to speak Spanish into acceptance in *Angel's Town*, but in other work must assert his American, professorial identity to gain the respect and trust of participants.

Early into my visits in both places I learned that outsiders were treated with significant skepticism, and that outsiders with institutional affiliations were even worse. This orientation makes sense, considering the influx of outsiders that swarmed to Greensburg and the Lower Ninth with many different motivations. One resident of Greensburg disclosed that many people who came to "help" had done mostly harm when they began construction projects and did not finish them, defrauded or scammed homeowners, or used the town's story to further their own ends. On bad days I worried that I was no different, possibly exploiting a struggling town for my own research. The puzzle that needed solving, then, was how to negotiate my differing and conflicting roles in an honest and productive manner. I *did* want to help, but I desperately wanted

to avoid neo-colonial attitudes or the assumption that I knew what was best for these communities. In some ways I *was* just a tourist and volunteer, but I was also always evaluating and filtering my daily experiences as tourist and volunteer through the lens of researcher. I wanted to assure that I let people speak for themselves and accessed their honest opinions, which was more common when they spoke to me as a friend and coworker. However, I wanted (and needed) to be open about the fact that I was working on a dissertation project where I might use what they said.

Ultimately, I negotiated these borderlands between researcher, friend, volunteer, and visitor in a few steps. When I first met fellow volunteers and residents, I did not lead with my role as a PhD student or chat about my dissertation. Instead, I was friendly and got to know them – a project that proved fascinating and enriching. When I sensed trust had been built and that we had developed a relationship, I shared that I was planning on writing about their community in my research project. Reactions were mostly positive, I assume because people felt I had taken the time to ask questions and understand their neighborhood. At that point, people often asked if I would put them into my dissertation, and I replied that I would – what would they like me to say about them? The resulting interviews and conversations, both formal and informal, comprise the bulk of interview data used in this dissertation.[57] Some of my friends at the volunteer house or residents around the neighborhood wanted to be "in my book," but felt ill qualified to contribute. "Why don't you just write down something smart, and say I said it," asked Tim. I explained that something like that was not ethical, and tried to coax him to give his input by emphasizing his tenure in the ward, his building expertise, and his strong relationships with community members. Tim did not buy it, and so his insights are regrettably absent. I am still uncertain that leading with friendship and parlaying those relationships into research was entirely

the right thing to do – people sometimes confided in me without knowing I was writing about it in the dissertation. However, I always shared my research agenda eventually, asked everyone whether I could write about our conversations, and made it clear that they would not be disappointing me if they refused. No one said no, which was wonderful, and I doubt I would have received the same reaction had I approached things in a different manner. With the exception of public and institutional figures, pseudonyms have been used to protect anonymity.

Another volunteer in the Lower Ninth Ward, Dan, was also a PhD student, but his approach was different, as was his success. He came to work only one day a week and did not live in the volunteer house. As a result, none of the other volunteers really liked Dan or voluntarily spoke with him – he was seen as an outsider. Dan confided in Joe, the patriarch of our little volunteer family, that he was writing his sociology dissertation on the Ninth Ward. "How can he write about a place he doesn't know anything about?" remarked Joe to the rest of us in disbelief. In Joe's eyes, Dan was the colonizer, the profiteer who preyed on residents for his own gain. It was a lesson I internalized and I worked hard not to fall into the same category. In fact, Joe and I had similar conversations about scholarly work during my time in New Orleans:

> Joe: How can you write about a place you don't live?
> Katie: Well, that's why I'm here right now. And that's why I'm talking to people, to let people speak for themselves.
> Joe: I guess. You need to buy a house down here is what you need to do! You can get one for a thousand bucks. We'd all help you fix it up.

Joe is not wrong, and I lament that scheduling and money only allowed six weeks in the Ninth Ward and a week in Greensburg. I similarly lament that there is such a difference in time spent in each place. As a result, I emphasize New Orleans more often in my analysis because I have more data for that case (both ethnographic data and media texts because Katrina was a larger story than the Greensburg tornado.)

In the following pages, I grapple with the tensions between critical research – that seeks to unmask hidden hegemonic discourses – and a feminist commitment to avoid putting words into people's mouths. I explore potential contradictions between my identification with these communities, my activist tendencies, and my identity as researcher and "outsider." Drawing from Pezzullo and Conquergood, I do not romanticize or fetishize "critical distance," nor do I retreat into solipsistic auto ethnography or subscribe to the notion that I can only analyze my personal experiences.[58] I attempt to walk a line between subjectivity and objectivity, subject and researcher, ethnographer and rhetorician. In the chapters that follow, I engage the intertextual discourses and built environments of Greensburg and the Lower Ninth Ward with the hopes that my analysis (1) illuminates the linkages between vernacular and official discourses that might otherwise go unnoticed, (2) extends existing theory about the intersection of rhetoric, space, and memory, and (3) offers points of intervention for critics, activists, and practitioners concerned with sustainability, development, and disaster mitigation.

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[1] Hurricanes, slushy alcoholic beverages of unknown contents, are signature to New Orleans. There are drive-thru Hurricane spots throughout the city where you can purchase gallons or single-serving beverages. I found the drive-thrus particularly perplexing, since they seemed to directly violate open container laws.

[2] George E. Marcus, "ETHNOGRAPHY IN/OF THE WORLD SYSTEM: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1995): 95-117.

[3] Elizabeth Walker Mechling and Jay Mechling, "The Campaign for Civil Defense and the Struggle to Naturalize the Bomb," *Western Journal of Communication* 55 (1991): 105-133.

[4] Ralph Cintron, *Angel's Town: Chero Ways, Gang Life, and the Rhetoric of the Everyday* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), 3.

[5] Michael Calvin McGee, "Text, Context, and the Fragmentation of Contemporary Culture," *Western Journal of Communication 54* (1990): 274-279.

[6] Marlia Banning, *Manufacturing Uncertainty: Contemporary U.S. Public Life and the Conservative Right*, Manuscript under review at the Pennsylvania State University Press.

[7] Ralph Cintron, "'Gates Locked' and the Violence of Fixation" in *Towards a Rhetoric of Everyday Life: New Directions in Research on Writing, Text, and Discourse*, Martin Nystrand and John Duffy, eds. (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003).

[8] Jim Thomas, "Musings on Critical Ethnography, Meanings, and Symbolic Violence," in *Expressions of Ethnography: Novel Approaches to Qualitative Methods*, Robin Patric Clair, ed.,, 45-55 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003).

[9] Nothstine, Blair, and Copeland, "Professionalism."

[10] Hartnett, "Communication, Social Justice."

[11] Dwight Conquergood, "Poetics, Play, Process, and Power: The Performative Turn in Anthropology," *Text and Performance Quarterly* 1 (1989): 85.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Dwight Conquergood, "Rethinking Ethnography: Towards a Critical Cultural Politics," *Communication Monographs* 58 (1991): 179–194.

[14] Gerard Hauser, *Vernacular Voices: The Rhetoric of Publics and Public Spheres* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999).

[15] McGee, "Text, Context."

[16] The lowercase capitalization is not a typographic error; erin insists on spelling her given and surnames without capital letters. See erin underwood, "A Rhetorical Ethnography," in *Place and Space in the Public Square: A Theoretical and Critical Framing of Platial Vernacular Rhetoric* (PhD diss., University of Colorado, 2007), 2.

[17] As research for this project, I read a wide swath of scholarly work about Hurricane Katrina. I find it interesting that researchers who have never been to New Orleans felt perfectly justified and qualified in making normative and sweeping statements about residents, planners, and government officials. Conversely, those that lived in New Orleans, or did fieldwork research felt the need to tip toe around normative claims, always qualifying as though the first day of fieldwork negated any right to critical judgment. Early versions of this study were treated similarly by reviewers, who questioned (perhaps rightly) my ability to make these claims with only 6 weeks on site.

[18] I owe this conception of the intersection of rhetoric and ethnography as heuristical to the rich methodological discussion I was a part of at the Rhetoric Society of America's Summer Institute workshop on rhetoric and ethnography, June 2011.

[19] Eileen E. Schell and K. J Rawson (Eds.), *Rhetorica in Motion: Feminist Rhetorical Methods and Methodologies* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010).

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ilene Whitney Crawford, "Growing Routes: Rhetoric as the Study and Practice of Movement," in *Rhetorica in Motion: Feminist Rhetorical Methods and Methodologies*, Eileen E. Schell and K.J. Rawson, eds. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 73.

[22] Ibid., 74.

[23] Lila Abu-Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

[24] Ibid.

[25] Crawford, "Growing Routes," 75.

[26] This is my own definition, but builds off the work of Sally Miller Gearhart, bell hooks, and many other feminist theorists. See bell hooks, "Feminism: A Movement to End Sexist Oppression," in *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, 17-31. (New York: South End Press, 1984); Sally Miller Gearhart, "The Womanization of Rhetoric," *Women's Studies International Quarterly* 2 (1979): 195-201.

[27] hooks, "Feminism."

[28] de Certeau, *Practices of Everyday Life*.

[29] Edward Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 2.

[30] Ibid.

[31] McGee, "Text, Context."

[32] Crawford, "Growing Routes," 76.

[33] Paula Chapman Sangar, "Living and Writing Feminist Ethnographies: Threads in a Quilt Stitched From the Heart," in *Expressions of Ethnography: Novel Approaches to Qualitative Methods*, ed. Robin Patric Clair, 29-44 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003).

[34] Nothstine, Blair, and Copeland, "Professionalism," 55.

[35] Sonja Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland, 1996), 6.

[36] Peter Simonson, "The Streets of Laredo: Mercurian Rhetoric and the Obama Campaign," *Western Journal of Communication 74* (2010): 94-126.

[37] Ibid., 95.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*.

[40] Ibid., 16.

[41] Ibid., 39. Some scholars chose to translate the third element of the triad as "Spaces of Representation, though in the Donaldson-Nichols translation, it reads "Representational Space."

[42] Ibid., 38.

[43] Capturing this kind of spatial practice is precisely Jane Jacobs's project in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* when she explains that planners and urbanists do not pay enough attention to the "daily ballet," how people actually use the spaces in which they live. Lefebvre would agree. In fact, he mentions Jacobs admiring more than once in *The Production of Space,* praising her civic engagement and insistence upon action.

[44] Ibid., 34.

[45] See Marc Gottdiener, "A Marx for Our Time: Henri Lefebvre and the Production of Space," *Sociological Theory* 11 (1993): 129-134.

[46] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 39, emphasis his.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid., 41.

[49] See chapters four and five.

[50] See, e.g. Editorial, "Katrina Five Years Later," *The New York Times*, September 1, 2010.

[51] See Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1994).

[52] Hauser, *Vernacular Voices,* 109.

[53] Shulamit Reinhartz, *Feminist Methods in Social Research* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 19.

[54] Denzin and Lincoln, *Handbook*.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Abu-Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments*, 10.

[57] I approached nonprofit employees very differently; I was upfront about my research, did little relationship building, and generally the interview was the only interaction we had.

[58] Pezzullo, *Toxic Tourism*, 20.

Chapter 3

Populist Environmentalism:

The "Common Green" Rhetoric of Sustainable Development and Community Contestation

"What green should be, what we want to show people green can be, is that you can have this, and it's going to keep your costs down and it's going to work for you within your budget."[1]

"You won't find self pity in Greensburg, Kansas. If you stop by Mayor Dixson's place, you may hear this piece of advice handed down from his grandparents: "You take lemons and you make lemonade, and then you take lemonade and you make lemon meringue pie. And when things get the worst, they're not the worst, look around, somebody else has got it a whole lot worse than you do. Don't feel sorry for yourself, get after it and get things taken care of. And that is the mentality of rural America."[2]

"For some people living in the Lower Ninth Ward, sustainable building and renewable power are more than just utopian concerns."[3]

While volunteering in the L9W I served as a crew leader, meaning that I was the on-site boss for anywhere between six and twenty high school or college kids who donated a week of their summer to build homes for the less fortunate in New Orleans. I dispensed them on a myriad of different errands, from painting to sanding to cleaning or guerilla gardening. New Orleans is known for its stormy weather during the hotter months however, and often when we would be slated to paint the exterior of a house, Mother Nature would not cooperate. On one such day, the project manager told me to walk the kids over to the Lower Ninth Ward Village instead of waiting around for the rain to let up.

Run by local folk hero Mack, the Village is a community center with the main goal of empowering "community members to be self-sufficient and to sustain an equitable quality of life." Before delegating tasks to the fifteen or so volunteers (I had added to the other visitors there to help for the day) Mack spoke about the plight of his neighborhood. He wove the tale of how he decided to buy the building and how he desired for the community to be "made whole"

again after the storm. His vision for the Village was to create a locus of pragmatic programs to help "sustain the community," including job training and literacy programs as well as recycling initiatives and organized care for empty lots to aid with flooding and water reclamation. The Village's "Where's Your Neighbor" program comprises a database detailing each former-resident's whereabouts and the obstacles standing in the way of their return. The idea is for residents to band together, so that if one resident needs a stove and another resident is discarding one, that appliance can be recycled in a way that makes the neighborhood "better than it was before."

Mack passionately spoke to the visitors about community connection; he shared that his neighborhood was so strong because of their resilience, their ties to one another and to the history and folklore of the Ninth Ward. But he also spoke frankly about the dangers to the city's youth and how "sustainability" involved mitigating social and cultural dangers as well as supplying simple solutions to residents' problems. I came to realize through this and many other interactions in Louisiana and Kansas that, for those residents who believed in the green rebuilding project, the root of their belief lay in the understanding that sustainability was in keeping with their community's values and identity, that it was a rebuilding strategy that made sense for "the common folk" and not just for big city outsiders. Conversely, those residents who did not buy into the sustainable rebuilding strategy most often rejected it because of their concern that it was elitist and imposed on their beloved community by a bunch of outsiders who did not really understand or care about their specific and very localized problems. This tension between believers and nonbelievers mirrors a larger tension between haves and havenots, rural and urban, liberal and conservative that divides the nation.

In chapter seven, I will explore how the narratives of Greensburg and the Lower Ninth Ward played out in the national imaginary. Here, I focus more specifically on the discourse of two local communities, and explore issues of community identity, green rebuilding, and contestation. Analyzing textual fragments from ethnographic data, official sustainable development plans created by these two communities, and media representations and interviews of residents, I argue that residents and stakeholders employ rhetorical tactics of populism to justify their greening projects. This rhetoric of "common green" is achieved through: (1) emphasizing affordability over ideology, the "common thrift" topos, (2) insisting that 'green' is in keeping with local history and values, the "common roots" topos, and (3) stressing the intelligence and efficiency of sustainable development, the "common sense" topos. Together, these rhetorical moves create a hybrid populist environmentalism that both builds on and amends traditional populist argument for localized purposes. However, despite the emphasis in both communities on consensus and community input, both cases reveal potent contestation over the meaning of green and it's influence on community identity. Parallel moves of populist refutation include arguments that sustainability is (1) hypocritical, (2) imposed by outsiders, and (3) impractical. Before delving into these different rhetorical strategies, however, it is important to expose the links between environmental communication scholarship and populist rhetoric.

Topoi of Green Discourse and Populist Rhetorics

In the backlash imagination, America is always in a state of quasi-civil war: on one side are the unpretentious millions of authentic Americans; on the other stand the bookish, all-powerful liberals who run the country but are contemptuous of the tastes and beliefs of the people who inhabit it. – Thomas Frank[4]

Robbie Cox argues that environmental communication should be pragmatic, meaning that it is concerned with solving real problems in practical ways, and that it is constitutive, meaning that the way we talk about the environment invites us to view the environment in a particular

way. Environmental communication scholars are entering their third decade of organized

scholarship, and have explored a number of different tropes, discursive frames, and pragmatic

ends of environmental discourse. For example, Killingsworth and Palmer investigate the use of

apocalyptic argument in canonical environmental texts such as Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* or

Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*.[5] In these discourses, the possibility of future disaster and

destruction is used to justify the need for change. For George Myerson and Yvonne Rydin, the

primary topos of sustainability is "newness" and "innovation," so the potentialities of the future

and forward-thinking "new" solutions are grounds for action.[6] Daniel Grano, in contrast,

explores the spiritual element of environmentalism.[7] Grano argues that spiritual connection

between humans and other creatures is the justification for engaging in sustainable practices. In

the cases of Greensburg and the Lower Ninth Ward, however, I argue that a different frame is

used to offer justification for green building and environmental sustainability. These projects

represent collective visions for a new "green" community identity. Achieving community-wide

buy-in requires a different type of sustainability rhetoric, a rebranding I call populist

environmentalism.

As Sheldon Hackney writes in 1971, "'populist' has become a protean term whose

connotations cover at times demagogic appeals to irrational popular prejudices and at other times

a noble regard for the uncorrupted wisdom of the common man."[8] Michael Lee argues that

populist argumentative structure positions a "virtuous people against a powerful enemy and

expresse[s] disdain toward traditional forms of democratic deliberation and republican

representation."[9] The first populist agrarian movement arose in the 1890s, in response to acute

disparities in income between portions of the U.S. citizenry not unlike those faced today.

Farmers at the end of the 19th century faced increased corporate control, a mortgage epidemic as

technological advances required the leasing heavy machinery to remain competitive, and a lack

of political power.[10] While the movement waxed and waned in popularity, it has never

completely disappeared. Lee insists that although populist discourse may endure shifts in focus

and content, the structure always remains the same, possessing the one-two punch of romantic

celebration of small town values and critique of the larger corporate and political landscape.

Populist rhetors speak for the honest, hard-working, god-fearing "common man," position this

decent citizen in opposition to "elites," and locate victory in returning to a simpler time. In his

populist treatise for example, Christopher Lasch laments that "the new elites are in revolt against

'Middle America,' as they imagine it: a nation technologically backward, politically reactionary,

repressive in its sexual morality, middlebrow in its tastes, smug and complacent, dull and

dowdy."[11] In his *New York Times* bestseller, Thomas Frank argues that populist argument such as

Lasch's is the primary rhetorical tool of the "Great Backlash" of conservatism in America. Frank

contends that "the backlash imagines itself as a foe of the elite, as the voice of the unfairly

persecuted, as a righteous protest of the people on history's receiving end."[12] For example,

conservative pundit Ann Coulter argues in her most recent book that democrats have a "casual

contempt" for the views and values of "normal people."[13] Similarly, Newt Gingrich famously

referred to Democrats as "the enemy of normal Americans."[14] Sarah Palin often adopts populist

rhetoric, claiming during her 2008 campaign for the Vice Presidency that, "we believe that the

best of America is in these small towns that we get to visit, and in these wonderful little pockets

of what I call the real America, being here with all of you hard working very patriotic, um, very,

um, pro-America areas of this great nation." Palin's discourse contrasts "real America" with the

vilified "liberal elites," a symbolic division of populist argument that Thomas Frank argues

found renewed power in the emergence of the visual representation of 2000 election results as a

matter of "red" versus "blue" states.[15] Another defining quality of populism is distaste for ideology. "The current catchwords – diversity, compassion, empowerment, entitlement – express the wistful hope that deep divisions in American society can be bridged by goodwill and sanitized speech," writes Lasch.[16] Elites are impractical, populists argue, and afterall, "what does it profit the residents of the South Bronx to enforce speech codes at elite universities?"[17] Democracy works best, a populist insists, when people do things for themselves with the aid of neighbors instead of depending on big government or other outsiders. Self-reliance (not to be confused with self-sufficiency or rugged individualism) is essential for Lasch. While practical skill is valued, populists do concede that neighbors should help one another, but stop short of approving government regulation or the aid of outsiders. Populist arguments based upon these principles possess moral power and have been effective for decades in mobilizing rural populations for specific political ends.

Frank offers a comprehensive list of what characterizes "red-staters" (or the common people, real America, etc) in contemporary populist argument. First, a red-stater is humble; they are happier with simpler things and find comfort in old-fashioned activities. Second, a red-stater is reverent and God-fearing. Third, they are courteous, kind, and cheerful. Fourth, red-staters are loyal, patriotic, and willing to serve their country. Fifth, and above all, "a red-stater is a regular, downhome working stiff."[18] One of the paradoxes that confounds Frank therefore, is that although populism professes to be of and for the working man and concerned with wholesome values from a simpler time, the wealthiest Americans are those who really benefit and "downhome" values take a backseat once elections are one.[19] Marlia Banning insists that modern Tea Party rhetoric, which calls itself populist, but which does not really adhere to populist principles, gains power through misdirection, building on cultural resentment to take attention

away from the neoliberal apparatus responsible for a loss of quality of life in America and

refocusing the public's ire on liberal "elites."[20] Populist argument is effective in rallying rural

America to the conservative agenda, Frank argues, but despite the fact that campaign promises

are rarely delivered and the economic interests of Middle America are systematically devastated,

believers remain steadfast and loyal.

However, populist rhetoric is not reserved for the political campaign or conservative

soapbox, and as Banning argues, many contemporary political discourses are populist in name

only.[21] It is an argumentative frame with chameleon-like qualities, Lee argues, and can be

adapted quite readily to the needs of the rhetor.[22] In the cases of Greensburg and the Lower Ninth

Ward, amended populist arguments are made to present sustainability as "common," making

green initiatives suitable for the "real America" (both rural and urban) and creating narratives in

which sustainable redevelopment is a weapon against the economic downturn, crime, outside

influence, and vulnerability. As Thomas Frank argues, what really divides America is

authenticity in the populist view:

> While liberals commit endless acts of hubris, sucking down lattes, driving ostentatious
> European cars, and trying to reform the world, the humble people of the red states go
> about their unpretentious business, eating down-home foods, vacationing in the Ozarks,
> whistling while they work, feeling comfortable about who they are, and knowing they are
> secure under the watch of George W. Bush, a man they love as one of their own.[23]

What is so significant, then, in the rhetorics of Greensburg and the Lower Ninth Ward is the

emergence of a framing of sustainability as authentic, a sustainability of the common American.

This hybrid populist environmentalism embraces some traditional elements of populism (mistrust

of elites, healthy skepticism, emphasis on thrift, distaste of ideology, championing the common

farmer and independent worker) while tweaking or reframing other elements of populism in

order to justify and gain support for sustainable development. For example, although populist

argument is traditionally against progressive action and looks back to a simpler time for solutions, populist environmentalism handles this tension by arguing that conservation and stewardship is in keeping with the lifestyles of Kansans of old or past residents of the Lower Ninth Ward. Progressive solutions are rebranded as traditional in a twist on a classic populist topos. It is through the use of populist topoi that "green" is successfully rebranded of and for the masses.

Indeed, one of the problems long-plaguing the environmental movement is the notion that sustainability is solely the concern of guilty upper-class liberals who have the luxury to spend indiscriminately on organic produce, recycled paper towels, and hybrid sport utility vehicles. In the words of Ann Coulter, "no matter how much liberals try to dress up their nutty superstitions about global warming as 'science,' it's a bunch of fanatic nonsense."[24] While environmentalist activists are concerned about impending climate apocalypse, the argument goes, "real America" is worried about feeding their families. Banning argues that this neoliberal logic is pervasive in American culture; the conservative apparatus strategically asserts that climate change is a problem of the distant future (that is, if it is a problem at all.)[25] However, neither Greensburg nor the Lower Ninth is populated by wealthy elites. Justifying green building in these local communities, therefore, requires a reframing of sustainable building as appropriate for the "common American," or the "non-elite." Furthermore, both communities faced a catastrophic exigency, a disaster which forced community members to acknowledge that climate change and sustainability were not tasks for future generations, but contemporary considerations. Although one community is lower middle class, rural, and mostly white while the other is working class poor, urban, and mostly black, similar rhetorical tactics of populism are used to justify green rebuilding efforts and insist that these communities are models for the rest of America. As

Governor Sebelius remarked during President Bush's visit to Greensburg, "We have an opportunity to rebuild a real American town."[26] This is a reframing of green as a concept of and for the common American is significant for three main reasons. First, the success of this populist discourse points to an effective rhetorical technique that other environmental activists may use to ameliorate their poor ethos and persuade citizens that sustainability is a valid cause. Second, these two cases really illustrate the powerful nature of populist argument and its ability to traverse party lines or the political arena. Third, the use of this populist environmentalism is not an isolated incident, but an emergent discourse of environmentalist argument that must be made transparent.

Populist environmentalist argument as it manifests in Greensburg and the Lower Ninth has three topoi, or *commonplaces*. Aristotle distinguished between "common" and "specific" topoi, arguing that the common topoi could be applied to any of the species of oratory.[27] Cicero conceptualized commonplaces as seats or sources of argument, and argued that they were important for two of his five canons of rhetoric: invention and memory.[28] Arguing for a renewed understanding of creativity, rhetoric, and commonplaces, Richard McKeon asserts that "it is appropriate that commonplaces be transformed from collections of fixed and established, communicable clichés to neutral sources of new perceptions operative in new direction in the thought and culture and philosophy of the twentieth century."[29] For my purposes, discussing topoi as commonplaces holds double meaning. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, *common*, derived from the French *commune* refers to "the common people, as distinguished from those of rank or dignity." As an adjective, *common* means either "pertaining to or characteristic of ordinary persons," or "of the community or commonalty." The three topoi of populist environmentalism are then both common in the sense of being established rhetorical

commonplaces, and common in their argument for values attributed to the common, ordinary

folk in opposition to elites. In the following section I will elaborate upon the three

commonplaces of populist environmental argument: Common Thrift, Common Roots, and

Common Sense.

"It's Gonna Work For You Within Your Budget:" Common Thrift

Populist rhetors consider social welfare programs inefficient, but also immoral because

they do not require the self-reliance they hold so dear. Indiscriminant spending is the enemy of

the honest working man, especially when money is spent on social programs. At an individual

level, Frank notes that populists insist they have simple thrifty tastes like McDonalds and

Walmart, and reject frozen lattes (for which there seems to be a particular hatred), gourmet

meals, and pricey Volvos.[30]

During the last five years, Brad Pitt has given hundreds of interviews about the Make It

Right (MIR9) Charity he runs in the Lower Ninth Ward. Make It Right seeks to build 150

sustainable homes in the part of the L9W directly adjacent to the levy breach, homes to be

occupied only by residents who lived in the neighborhood before Katrina hit. In virtually all of

these publicity interviews, Pitt emphasized affordability as the primary goal of the project. In an

interview with Ann Curry for example, he claims, "Our goal was affordability, first,

sustainability, safety, of course, was a big issue," and later remarks that "this is the road to

affordable housing that you see right here."[31] In the *New York Times*, Pitt remarks, "Green

technologies were thought of as a rich man's tool, but if we could make them work in houses

designed for the lowest income level…we could really prove our argument."[32] Pitt's approach is

a persuasive one, as he seeks to make "a rich man's tool" into something useful for the common

American. In contrast, coverage of the MIR9 in design magazines often emphasizes the homes'

"avant garde" appearance or "cutting edge designs." For example, *DWELL Magazine* coverage highlights the "all-star lineup" of architectural talent working on the project and the "experimental, even ground-breaking houses designed by cutting-edge architects."[33] The popular press, however, have picked up on the populist trope that green is about thrift and affordability in the L9W. In most media coverage of the MIR9 homes, high design is treated almost as a liability, an elitist indulgence that can only be justified because of the homes' affordability and efficiency. One *New York Times* reporter writes, for example, "The houses seem better suited to an exhibition of avant-garde architecture than to a neighborhood struggling to recover."[34] When residents or future residents of the MIR9 homes are interviewed, many find the innovative "green" aspects of the home of secondary importance, or put them in more pragmatic and less ideological terms. For example, Vernessa Rogers, interviewed in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, is excited that her modern take on the shotgun house layout has the most space of the design options. In the words of the reporter, Vernessa "swoons" because the house "has a nice high porch and a trellis," and adds afterward that "and it's going to be a green house, and that will save me a lot of money on electricity."[35] Here, green means money.

In the Holy Cross Neighborhood Sustainable Restoration Plan (SR), the first recommendation is that the Lower Ninth neighborhood be "rebuilt in ways that optimize both the safety of future residents and the affordability of their homes and businesses."[36] Sustainability has nothing to do with ideology here – it has to do with building safe, inexpensive dwellings for displaced community members. Many of the L9W homeowners with whom I volunteered engaged in "green" practices merely because they were the thriftiest option, with only secondary concern for the environment or the public good. Although it is the tradition in New Orleans to paint homes in bright colors and incorporate intricate latticework to display the homeowner's

personality to the neighborhood, none of the homes I worked on followed this tradition. Instead, residents purchased "recycled paint" from *The Green Project*, which was cheap enough to cover an entire house for less than twenty-five dollars, but only came in white, beige, or gray. On their website, *The Green Project* assert that they are a "hands-on environmental organization" concerned with "providing affordable paint to the community" and benefiting "New Orleans' residents by returning their ruined building materials to use elsewhere in the city."[37] Emphasizing their "hands-on" approach to sustainability is a classic populist argument. Noted populist Henry Ford, for example, argued that every manufacturer "should be able to go into the shop and with his own hands make the thing that he wants to manufacture. If he cannot do this… he is but a parasite."[38] Being efficient, economical, and skilled with one's hands are pillars of populist sentiment.

Similarly, homeowner decisions about whether to use toxic and inefficient fiberglass insulation or the "greener" spray foam option depended entirely on cost. When the spray foam businesses donated their services, residents accepted. When they did not, residents bought and we installed the cheap, toxic fiberglass, itching like crazy for hours afterward. Before demolition, volunteers spent days salvaging what was still useful from the old water-logged structures because residents were responsible for purchasing materials, and the less they had to purchase, the likelier it was that they would be able to fund their home to completion. In the words of one homeowner, a woman who was so pressed for money that she would have to save up for months between each step in the construction process, "it ain't sustainable if I can't pay for it." Truly sustainable development, "common green," is cost-effective.

When I asked homeowners if they planned on incorporating "green" design elements, most replied that they would consider it if it would save them money, but that their first priority

was being able to afford the construction process and move in as soon as possible. The excerpt

below is from a conversation with one resident, whose home was in a historic part of the

neighborhood. As such, he had obligations to keep the new home historically accurate. One

organization, *Historic Green*, worked with residents to combine historical detail and sustainable

building practices. However, residents were quite skeptical of the organization's utility, and this

excerpt represents the kind of ambivalence felt by residents about sustainability.

> Katie: So are you gonna work with Historic Green to make sure the new construction is
> sustainable and historically accurate?
>
> Dewayne: Um, those people…. No offense, but I want to avoid all 'dat. I heard about
> [another neighbor's] mess with the windows, and he had to rebuild that shit five times! I
> mean, can you imagine? Plus y'all aren't exactly experts. And those people are like, from
> Uptown or wherever and don' get what we're trying to work with down here.
>
> Katie: Have you done anything green rebuilding your shotgun?
>
> Dewayne: yeah! The insulation is gonna help keep my energy bills down, and the white
> roof is big on that too. Cooler in summers. Even working in there now, ain't it better than
> [another homeowner's] house in 'dis heat? [laughs.] I say green? Only green if it saves
> me some green [laughs.]

Here, Dewayne is only accepting of sustainable building if it's clear to him that making

sustainable choices will save him money. In fact, practices are *only* green if they meet the thrift

requirement. If not, they are elite nonsense to be avoided at all costs. Dewayne is leery of the

"uptown" *Historic Green* organization, whose members (at least the ones he and I had met) come

from the richest part of the city and are all white. Although these sustainability advocates live in

his city, they do not understand his community's needs and are concerned with accurate historic

preservation over pragmatism. Their brand of sustainability is not right for his working class

community, because they "don get what we're trying to work with down here." Dewayne is also

concerned with the practical limitations of volunteer labor (such as myself,) who do not have any

construction expertise, let alone expertise in green or historically preserved fixtures. In an earlier conversation, Dewayne elaborated on this concern, arguing that sustainability is "just a nice idea" for *HistoricGreen* while he was more concerned about practicality. Residents like Dewayne have effectively rejected "mere ideology" and focused instead on thrift. I do not mean to imply that Dewayne and other residents do not take pride in the appearance of their homes, only that their first priority is keeping costs down and building as quickly as they can. This attitude makes sense for any homeowner, let alone one working to return to a hurricane-ravaged neighborhood with little or no governmental support. Sustainability only becomes desirable when it represents a cheaper option.

In Greensburg, residents also express the potential of green building in economic terms. While residents do mention "affordability" and laud green building for lowering their bills, the more common focus in Greensburg is on the generation of "green tourism" that will bolster the struggling local economy and provide new jobs. This is a direct parallel to populist focus on civic boosterism, where self-sufficiency as a town relied upon ability to obtain a railroad spur, post office, and the county seat.[39] In this contemporary amendment of the populist trope, rural towns that obtain a good industry or a specific economic vision grow and thrive, while all others will fall permanently behind.[40] While Greensburg residents show a fondness and nostalgia for their town before the tornado struck, they also admit that they were struggling financially. According to the GSCMP, "prior to the tornado, Greensburg was facing disinvestment and a steadily declining population."[41] Mayor John Jenson claims that in Greensburg, "we were dying a slow death" before the storm. The goal, then, of the rebuilding effort is to "become an economically, environmentally, and culturally sustainable town."[42] Again, the Mayor positions thrift and economic concerns first and gives them the most emphasis. As written in the GSCMP:

The primary goal for tourism development is typically to increase the number of tourists, the length of their stay, and the dollar amount they spend in town. The goal in Greensburg is to create a consistent and authentic tourism strategy based on enhancing past attractions and building upon the many demonstrations of sustainable living currently under way.[43]

According to residents I spoke with in July of 2010, this strategy is working, despite the fact that much of the town is still under construction and local businesses have only recently returned to the newly completed downtown commerce area.

Katie: Have you gotten a lot of tourists?

Mary: Oh yeah! People are curious about what happened here. We get lots of folks coming and asking about the tornado. Or Leonardo DiCaprio. [Whispers] He was very handsome!

Katie: How many people visit the Greensburg Greentown model home?

Dave: Well, depends. But see, there's a baseball tournament this weekend, so lots of folks stop on their way to Pratt [the next closest town.] People come here because the Big Well is closed, and they want to see something. I guess 10-20 a day? Which was more than the well used to get. When things are done it'll be more I'spect. [Long Pause] Right now, some people drive in, don't see anything, and drive out again. So that's a problem.

Tourism is starting to pick up according to resident accounts, although they admit there is significant room for improvement. In fact, if Dave's account above is accurate, tourist numbers have not yet recovered to the pre-tornado highs. The town also hopes to attract manufacturing and sustainability startup companies based on their reputation as a green community, but also on their history and experience in the agriculture industry.

While green tourism is not listed as a goal in the SR plan, recommendations for "economic prosperity" in the L9W include promoting historic tourism and "the development of arts and cultural activities that bring 24-hour activity to the waterfront."[44] Residents expressed the desire to support and foster locally owned businesses as part of their economic plan, with the justification that local businesses will "contribute to the community and not just exploit it."[45]

This trusting of the local over other sorts of economic development and emphasis on community ties points to the second rhetorical topos of common green: locating sustainability in the realm of the local and arguing that green is in keeping with longstanding community identity and values.

"That is What Kansas is About:" Common Roots

In the first episode of *Greensburg* on the Discovery Channel, city administrator Steve Hewitt insists that environmental concern is about as Kansan as you can get. He remarks, "when you talk about the environment, that is what Kansas is about: wide open spaces, beautiful wheat fields, grasslands. What's more green than agriculture? You know, that's what it means, it means understanding what your environment's about and respecting that environment." Again and again in interviews and in the masterplan, "Common Kansan values" are evoked as the root of true sustainability (See Fig. 3.1.)

A COMMON VISION;
A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE
The root of sustainability is based in common Kansas values. A Kansan thinks in terms of generations and harbors a sincere belief that decisions should build strong communities for our children. We still believe in the power of community, and in our rural areas neighbors still gather at the coffee shop to talk about the issues of the day. A Kansan's character is rooted in the agricultural industry prominent in the region. We understand the natural systems that power a sustainable economy and know what it means to live off, and with, the land.

Fig 3.1. "Common Vision" Excerpt from the GSCMP Document

It is a strong sense of community that harbors concern for the future. It is a Kansan experience with agriculture and farming that instills respect for nature and "living off the land." The plan's authors offer tradition and local values as justification for the adoption of the sustainable

redevelopment agenda. Furthermore, the plan insists that Kansans are uniquely suited for pioneering sustainability initiatives because they truly "understand" natural systems. In this way, residents reconcile Greensburg's new identity as the locus of sustainability with the old Kansan town. Agricultural knowhow and self-reliance are essential topoi of populism, and in this populist environmentalist argument, the expertise and old fashioned values residents are so proud of are not just complimentary to, but essential for "true sustainability."

In fact, when discussing Greensburg, many reporters emphasize that the sustainability initiatives are so remarkable *because* the area is so conservative. "Even if it were the only one of its kind," writes one *New York Times* reporter, "Mike Estes' brand-new, energy-efficient, wind-powered, water-conserving, environmentally sensitive John Deere dealership here would attract considerable attention in Kansas. This is a state that consistently ranks among the top 10 in oil and natural gas production, and routinely elects to Congress skeptics on matters of energy conservation and environmental regulation."[46] Greensburg is worthy of note especially because they are building green, "and they're going to do it all in one of the most conservative corners of one of the most conservative states in the nation."[47] David Wallach, director of the nonprofit *Greensburg Greentown* expresses often in press interviews that as an outsider from Colorado, where "green" is well accepted practice, he was worried about how Kansans would take to the idea. "The radical re-creation of this conservative farming town may seem unlikely, but the project," Wallach remarks to *The New York Times*, "gives meaning to our pain and suffering."[48]

What made conservative Kansans embrace sustainable development? "Townspeople were won over as proponents stressed history over hipness. More 'Little House on the Prairie,' less Al Gore. They were reminded that their great-grandparents who settled in the 1880s were frugal stewards of the land who recycled, repurposed and used windmills and cisterns."[49] Just as Steve

Hewitt and the GSCMP emphasized above, residents can frame "green" as a value that is in keeping with communal identity and how their ancestors lived and worked, making it local and suitable for "real America," not just the concern of liberal elites or hippie tree-huggers. "At first our misperception of what 'green' meant was tree-huggers and crazies," says current town Mayor Robert Dixson. "But in fact, our ancestors were environmental stewards. They lived within the resources they had available and protected them because they knew they needed them for the future."[50] Interestingly, the opponent of populist rhetors has not changed: liberal elites, radical treehuggers, and hippies are still vilified in the populist environmentalist discourse. During one Greensburg town meeting scheduled to discuss the possible construction of a big "green space" in the center of town, one council member loudly rejected the idea because another town he had visited with such a large park was overrun with unsavory elements. "When we went there, I didn't dare walk through that park," he insists, "there was nothing there but motorcycle gangs, and hippies with pregnant women sittin around with their bellies hangin out, and druggies."[51] What has changed here is the reframing of a sustainability separate from counter-culture. Hippies are still one of the cultural others of populism, along with unionized workers and urban nonwhites.

It is interesting then, that in a locale so far removed from Greensburg, the mostly black, urban residents of the L9W adopt the similar argument that sustainability has roots in their community values and localized history. While the Lower Ninth Ward certainly has no roots in agriculture or "living off the land," they do take pride in their unbreakable community ties ("fostering community" is often cited as a goal of sustainable development) and their local architectural tradition, which offers protection from hurricanes. Pam Dashiell, who started the Center for Sustainable Education and Development (CSED) in the Lower Ninth Ward argues,

"this is a real environmental place. People here have a respect for nature and the environment and values of thriftiness and energy efficiency." At first this statement perhaps seems silly to environmental communication scholars– everywhere can be equally "environmental" in the sense that environment means one's surroundings, manmade and natural. What Dashiell is driving at, however, is that the Lower Ninth Ward is an environmentally conscious place, a place both capable of and worthy of sustainable growth and development. Often, community values -- thriftiness, efficiency – are evoked as activists and residents try to justify their choices and deservedness to outsiders.

One way that sustainability is linked with values of New Orleans or more specifically to the Lower Ninth Ward is through evoking the community's past struggles and their undying resilience. Miss Henrietta, a L9W resident who is using a Salvation Army grant in order to update her home with energy efficient appliances and proper insulation notes that "you can' break our spirit in The Ward. We comin' back, cuz we always come back. And now, we comin' back sustainable too." "We're resilient in New Orleans," insists resident Emily Clarke, "We're survivors. There's a real heart to this city that you don't get anywhere else."[52]

Another strategy of arguing for the common roots of sustainability in New Orleans is emphasizing localized home and building design. In *Newsweek*, for example, one reporter insists that:

> "If you want to understand what makes sustainable sense, check out the classic old shotgun houses of New Orleans that best survived Katrina (and just got a pass from Gustav): these modest homes are built high off the ground to resist flood damage; they are made of local wood that dried out; they have high ceilings and cross ventilation to deal with the stifling summer heat. But the houses that were ruined – whether in the Lower Ninth Ward or more affluent neighborhoods – tended to be low-slung ranch houses, a style originally developed for the climate of California."[53]

Sustainability is equated with vernacular architecture here, with appropriate building for the local terrain and climate. This text also points to the third rhetorical commonplace of populist environmentalism: that building green makes "sustainable sense." The final tactic of populist environmentalism involves the expansion of sustainability from being proper for the local community to being common sense for everyone.

"It's Just Smart:" Common Sense

According to Frank, populist argument advocates practical wisdom and common sense over "ideological and moral confusion," irony, or witty showing off. In an interview defaming New York City and praising Kansas City, Ann Coulter explains, "They're Americans, they're so great, they're rooting for America. I mean, there's so much common sense!"[54] One common rhetorical tactic in Greensburg and the L9W is to acknowledge that, initially, residents were skeptical of "green," but upon further consideration they realized it was really beneficial. The implication here is that healthy skepticism of what might be an elite development plan (an essential populist topos) disintegrated once it became clear how efficient, intelligent, and cost-effective green building could be. In the words of one Greensburg resident, Marilyn, whose home-building saga was documented on Discovery Channel's *Greensburg*, "Going green on rebuilding, at first, I didn't really think much of it. But the more I'm getting involved, like, that's the first question I ask: Well ok, is it green? *How will it help us?*...We're really looking forward to having a green home and this is a big adventure for us." In New Orleans, residents expressed similar skepticism when Brad Pitt first introduced the *Make it Right* project. "I'm 80 percent there," explains one future resident, "I guess I'll be completely sold when I see the first house on a lot over there."[55] Indeed, some readers may question how I could be discussing populism at all when wealthy, left-leaning celebrities like Brad Pitt and Leonardo DiCaprio are bankrolling and

publicizing the efforts of the Ninth Ward and Greensburg. Residents seem to reconcile this contradiction in two ways. First, they emphasize that they too were skeptical, but then they learned that Pitt and DiCaprio were really just regular guys. Louis, one of the first people I met in the Lower Ninth, told me the story numerous times of how he had met Brad Pitt. Louis was going from house to house to turn off water valves and gas valves, and Brad Pitt came up behind him and asked him what he was doing. Louis explained that people would still have water bills to pay if the valves were not turned off, and claims Brad Pitt thanked him for his good idea and began helping. "He got dirty just like the rest of us," Louis claimed with pride. In Greensburg I heard similar tales of how "down to earth" Leonardo DiCaprio was, that he was grateful for a turkey sandwich during lunch and did not ask for anything fancy, or that he worked alongside volunteers in addition to "giving his money, which is easy."

Residents who were perhaps more cynical, though I chose to see them as practical, acknowledge that it is "selling out" to use Leonardo DiCaprio or Brad Pitt, but that it is a necessary evil. One of my most eager and helpful informants in Greensburg, Matt, actually asked if I would be willing to help him draft a strongly worded letter (I told him I studied rhetoric) to Leonardo DiCaprio to convince him that work still needed to be done in Greensburg and that he should feel compelled to use his celebrity to help. "He got the ball rolling," Matt insisted, "and now he needs to help us finish up." One elderly man, when he overheard a shopkeeper excitedly discussing DiCaprio's visit to town, rolled his eyes and said glibly, "people'll watch anything." When I asked members of Greensburg Greentown for their take on the DiCaprio phenomenon, they mostly expressed gratitude for his help (and significant financial donation) and claimed it was just good business to appeal to a celebrity's sense of philanthropy in contemporary, celebrity-obsessed culture.

Building green is justifiable because it's *smart*; it is in keeping with common sense instead of high-minded ideology. The Greensburg Sustainable Comprehensive Master Plan (GSCMP) notes on the first page that residents are only willing to "embrace common sense green solutions."[56] Mike, Estes, owner of the new green John Deere dealership in Greensburg similarly remarks to the *New York Times* that "we are learning that green makes sense."[57] In an article reporting on the progress of sustainability projects in New Orleans, one reporter writes, "Sustainability is about the practical systems of building, not the beauty of great design."[58]

Likewise, in the SR plan for the Ninth Ward, residents emphasize the need for a "plausible" kind of sustainability and an "intelligent plan to restore the Ward" and bring back those who left.[59] This is a pragmatic kind of sustainability, focused on a clear, practical goal of facilitating the return of replaced residents. Indeed, the objective that is accentuated first and foremost in the SR plan is "safety and survivability." Decreasing neighborhood vulnerability to storm surges, winds, flood, and social problems such as "blight" and crime are the primary goals of this brand of sustainable development. These aims are framed in the plan's discourse as "intelligent," and "courageous." "Common Green" then, means safety and smart building which will lower costs for residents, not just cater to a trend or serve as a pet project for rich celebrities. However, it is important to note that not everyone is so sure that sustainability is what is best for their local community or that environmentalism really can be a populist movement.

Community Input and Contestation

Of extreme importance to the populist environmental case is the insistence that the impetus for sustainable development came from local residents, not outsiders. Community input and public participation is emphasized over and over again. MIR9 Architect David Adjaye, in a television interview, says "to begin with the locals were quite suspicious. But the thing is if

you're talking to someone who's just lost everything in a flood, it's tough to talk about design. What they want is a roof over their head. It was challenging." However, Adjaye continues, after roundtable discussions with the MIR9 foundation, people are sold. "It's so interesting to have people select their own housing," says Adjaye. "They engage with the design and there's a real sense of ownership and social engagement."[60] These are the same sentiments echoed in articles about the Historic Green New Orleans projects. For example, a member of the EPA Region 2 EFC Team remarks, "It isn't about experts telling them what they need; it's about reaching out to the community and asking them what they want."[61] However, as detailed in Dewayne's conversation above, there is some ambivalence as to whether sustainability advocates really are incorporating community feedback, or whether they are only paying lip service to the ideal of public participation.

One of the commonly criticized problems with the original Bring New Orleans Back (BNOB) plan, as created by Wallace Roberts & Todd (WRT), a Philadelphia-based architecture firm, is that community input was not solicited and the firm was not local, though they were making important decisions that effected New Orleanians immensely. "WRT's opinion is very indicative of the way planners thing. It's very paternal," says Steven B. Bingler, a New Orleans architect who designed on of MIR9's top home designs. "We need to plan with people, not for people."[62] Like the other MIR9 designers, the news coverage insists, Bingler spent hours talking to residents and incorporating their own ideas. For example, L9W residents all hated flat roofs because it reminded them of FEMA trailers. It was this community input that lends the development plan its legitimacy.

This rhetoric recurs in Greensburg. In the second episode of Discovery's *Greensburg*, a representative from BNIM architects (who win the contract for the masterplan during the

episode) remarks that "every comprehensive plan has to be built on extensive public participation. And really, it's about talking to many people." It is important to note however, that in each community, while the majority may agree that green is the way to go, there is also considerable dissent. In Greensburg, for example, some residents express frustration with the many public-input meetings because talk prevents action. One unidentified resident on *Greensburg* exclaims that, "we've gone through four months of meetings, and committees, and steering committees and stuff like that…. the people of this community are trying to envision their future and they're trying to move forward." Generally, dissenters contest that the three topoi of common thrift, common roots, and common sense are present in the redevelopment plan, and argue that sustainability is not a populist movement. Dissenters make a case by maintaining populist values, but attacking green development as hypocritical, impractical, and imposed by outsiders with duplicitous political and social agendas. The following vignettes supply just a few examples of this oppositional populist argument.

Green as Hypocritical

On my last day in the Lower Ninth Ward, Joe drove me to the airport. Joe was a long-term volunteer who had been working with our organization for years and was about to quit to start up a newspaper in the L9W. We chatted in the car about how problematic and hypocritical it was that I refused to buy a car because of my environmental values, but that I flew all over the country to do research and visit friends. "At least you realize it's a problem," Joe said. "That's the first step to fixing it." The conversation shifted from my own hypocrisy to the larger hypocrisy of officials and charity organizations trying to rebuild 'green' in New Orleans. In the following conversation, Joe highlights just how hypocritical and political these "green discourses" could be in his beloved neighborhood.

Joe: Ok, so take [our organization]. We aren't that into green but when the investors come around, we pull that term out all over the place. It's about capitalizing on the trend, not really helping people. No one cares about green in the Lower Ninth – they want a grocery store and a school and safe houses. I mean take Juaraneta's organization [he is referring to The Lower Ninth Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement and Development]; what do they even do? I have no idea?

Now we have, what, on a slow week 50 shorties [slang for short-term volunteers] in here?

Katie: Yeah, more in summer or on breaks.

Joe: Right! And they only stay 2 or 3 days, a week at most. So that's 50-70 round trip flights a week? Think about how much that costs! We could hire tons of locals for that, and have their work actually be GOOD! Or teach local kids a trade, that they could go out and make money from. And the carbon emissions or what you call it, greenhouse gases, nothing is green about the house when you factor that in. From all those flights.

Joe certainly has a point, though our particular nonprofit was not as concerned with green building as, say, MIR9 or Global Green's Holy Cross Project. I had the experience numerous times over the summer of being asked to speak with potential investors as a "key volunteer." I had not been there very long and was not an especially skilled builder, so I can only assume that my high education level, relatively clean-cut appearance, and knowledge about sustainable planning made me the kind of volunteer organizers hoped would impress visitors and encourage large endowments. Our nonprofit did maintain a few community gardens around the neighborhood, but they were usually a low priority. When investors were coming to town, however, they were weeded, well cared for, and usually the first stop on the "tour." On those days, I was removed from my regular project for half a day and worked in the garden so I could act charming and answer questions about urban farming efforts when the investors arrived.

Green as Impractical

One of the most common claims made by residents, planners, and public officials alike about these two communities is that they are examples to be followed by other American communities as we rebuild our nation's infrastructure in a sustainable manner. In the SR plan,

residents argue that Katrina "created an opportunity for Holy Cross to demonstrate sustainable restoration practices for the rest of the Lower 9th, the City of New Orleans, and other damaged communities along the Gulf Coast."[63] The recoveries of these communities certainly are inspirational, and as explored a later chapter, the resilience of these communities functions as a lesson for all Americans facing adversity. However, stakeholders also claim that practically, these projects are models other communities can look to for development strategies. The problem, of course, is that even with federal grant money following the disaster (which most communities going green will not have), both Greensburg and the sustainability projects located in the Lower Ninth Ward required billions of dollars of corporate sponsorship for construction to begin. While Home Depot and Frito Lay's Sun Chips were excited to be associated with the first LEED certified town, or the first inner city carbon-neutral community, they will most likely not be as willing to finance the 11th or 217th town who tries to go green. Furthermore, the "affordable" MIR9 homes are only made so because the charity subsidizes more than half of the house's real cost and architects did not charge for their designs. The prestige of being involved with such a project was enough, but it probably will not be enough for other towns.

Understandably then, there is a dissenting discourse that tries to, as one unhappy Greensburg resident puts it, "show the holes in the rhetoric and bring us to reality." Interestingly, both sides of the debate share populist values and utilize populist argument; the interlocutors differ only in their positioning of sustainability either as common or elitist. During my second stay in town, I was invited to a town meeting to determine the future of the Twilight Theater, the historically significant theater in downtown Greensburg that residents are hoping to rebuild. Most other buildings are well on their way to being erected, but as a private structure and a nonessential business, Twilight is still far from being rebuilt. The Twilight Committee intend to

rebuild the theater "green" in keeping with the town's values, and they contracted with a sustainable contractor for a plan which would cost three million dollars. Dissenters claimed that this plan would unnecessarily cost millions more than traditional building (violating the common thrift topos,) that there are no more people left to donate money at this point, and that to focus on green building would delay the project, perhaps forever. Those against the proposed theatre plan also questioned whether other bids had been heard, and whether the theater should just be rebuilt the way it was without expanding the structure to serve as the school's auditorium. The debate grew so heated (and lasted for so many hours) that the audience called for dissolving of the Twilight Committee completely and appointing an entirely new committee to help move things forward. Emphasizing practicality in this case, the common argument was that "green" was synonymous for expensive and impractical. All of the new members (elected on the spot by a raising of hands) were either members of the dissenting group, or well known citizens who were determined and pronounced by the crowd to be "practical" and who would "get it done."

Green as Other

In the winter of 2010, I made my first trip to Greensburg, KS. I caught a ride with two friends who had a gig setting up equipment to collect data about optimum wind turbine positioning. I was stranded in town for 10 hours while they weighed and measured and diagnosed, and it was bone-chillingly cold. When I could not take the cold anymore and had witnessed as much in the little town as I cared to, I set up shop in the only open business in the center of town: the Green Bean. The coffee shop had just opened in the new "business incubator" building and it was humming with town activity. Mostly, I merely observed and spoke very little, hoping to overhear conversations of residents. The exercise did not disappoint and I overheard

and frantically scribbled down the following conversation between a few self-proclaimed "old-timers" who were not pleased about the new direction for the town.

> Elderly Man 1: Who do they think is gonna live in that new fancy apartment building? No one around here, that's who.

> Elderly Woman: Mmm hmm!

> Elderly Man 2: The old timers are getting pushed out. This isn't my community anymore.

Underlying this conversation is the belief that the sustainable plan for Greensburg was not in keeping with local values, was not of "common roots," but instead forced the older locals out of place and was geared toward attracting new, younger residents. This attitude is paralleled in Dewayne's conversation above, where historic "green" restoration is imposed on the Lower Ninth by outsiders from the rich part of town with skewed priorities. While residents certainly do not talk about sustainability in terms of patriarchy, hegemony, or colonialism, some of their dissent points to these phenomena. Class tension comes to the fore as "old timer" Greensburg residents express that sustainability is not in keeping with their values or needs. Racial and class-based tensions emerge in Dewayne's assertion that sustainability is often the frivolous consideration of rich white folks with excess time and excess money, not a practical principle for the Lower Ninth.

Conclusion

Populist environmentalism is a contested but increasingly prevalent mode of argument employed when discussing and justifying sustainability initiatives. For example, in October of 2010 *The New York Times* ran a piece on "climate skeptics" embracing cleaner energy elsewhere in Kansas.[64] Like the populist environmentalism cropping up in Greensburg and the Lower Ninth Ward, these Kansans are skeptical of big government intervention and are only interested in the kinds of sustainability that will cut costs.

Don't mention global warming," warned Nancy Jackson, chairwoman of the Climate and Energy Project, a small nonprofit group that aims to get people to rein in the fossil fuel emissions that contribute to climate change. "And don't mention Al Gore. People out here just hate him."[65]

Again, liberal elites are vilified as the cultural other, and scientific predictions of climate change

or ideological reasons for conservation are dismissed as uncertain and lacking sense.

Attempts by the Obama administration to regulate greenhouse gases are highly unpopular here because of opposition to large-scale government intervention. Some are skeptical that humans might fundamentally alter a world that was created by God.

If the heartland is to seriously reduce its dependence on coal and oil, Ms. Jackson and others decided, the issues must be separated. So the project ran an experiment to see if by focusing on thrift, patriotism, spiritual conviction and economic prosperity, it could rally residents of six Kansas towns to take meaningful steps to conserve energy and consider renewable fuels.[66]

It seems the experiment worked. Kansan towns that participated in the project reduced their

energy use by as much as five percent. Ms. Jackson and the proponents of the Climate and

Energy Project explain elsewhere that this experiment was an attempt to reframe climate change

for a population for whom opposition to environmental regulation "was becoming a cultural

marker that helped some Kansans define themselves." Employing similar techniques to those

used in Greensburg and New Orleans, the project emphasized Christian values, thrift and

affordability, and how practical it was not to rely upon foreign oil. This is an increasingly

prevalent reframing of green as a concept of and for the common American, and the practice is

significant for three reasons. First, as the above example indicates, the use of populist

environmentalism is not an isolated incident, but an emergent discourse of environmentalist

argument that must be made transparent.

Second, and most pragmatically, the success of this populist environmentalism points to

an effective rhetorical technique that other environmental activists may use. Residents in

Greensburg expressed concern that "climate change" was falsified in order to further big government's liberal social agenda. In the article discussed above, interviewed citizens expressed similar skepticism and accused scientists of being greedy for grant money instead of concerned about the future of the planet. Sustainability advocates have an ethos problem, and populist emphasis on local values, affordability, and practicality offer one possible avenue to convince citizens to amend their behavior.

Finally, these two cases really illustrate the powerful nature of populist argument and its ability to traverse Republican party lines. The emergence of populist tropes in the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans, for example, is quite unexpected and worthy of further exploration. Traditional populism is a rural phenomenon, and populist rhetors elevate agriculture above all other professions. Additionally, there is a racial component to populism; distrust of nonwhites is often expressed in a masked way as distrust of unionized workers or industrial workers because they lack the self-reliance so valued by populists.[67] No one in the L9W is a farmer, and the overwhelming majority of residents are black. Still, New Orleanians use amended populist arguments to emphasize that outsider input and government action is not to be trusted, that citizens must rely on each other, and that authentic sustainability is about thrift and common sense. Populist arguments based around pillars of self-reliance, practicality, and the ordinary citizen possess a moral power that warrants further exploration by rhetorical scholars.

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Chapter 4

The Geography of Vulnerability:

Place, Space, Race, and Representation in New Orleans and Greensburg

Race maps closely with the geography of environmental risk – Beverly Wright & Robin D. Bullard

No geography is complete, no understanding of place or landscape comprehensive, without recognizing that American geography, both as discipline and as spatial expression of American life, is racialized. –Audrey Kobayashi and Linda Peake

Poverty, in general, is considered pornographic, an embarrassing and shameful fact of life that leaders at all levels of government seem eager to shove into the shadows and otherwise render invisible. But there is no smoke screen large enough to obscure the fact that the poor are still with us and that their largely dark-skinned numbers are growing. – Alecia P. Long[1]

Critical geographers insist that injustice is "spatially manifest, reinforced, and contested."[2] Difference is closely linked to issues of access, both physical access and cultural belonging. Michael Silk argues "space is a site of social struggle in which dominant power relations can be constructed, contested, and reproduced."[3] Interrogating and unmasking the spatial nature of oppression is so important because it provides a clearer theoretical and practical understanding of social justice, specifically how it "is created, maintained, and brought into question as a target for democratic social action."[4]

In the following chapter, I begin by reflecting on the interconnected nature of space, place, and race, defining environmental racism and environmental justice. I then offer historical context of the environmental vulnerabilities suffered by New Orleans, and especially the Lower Ninth Ward, and to a lesser extent, Greensburg, Kansas. Chapter three lauded the intelligent framing used by community residents to justify and garner support for their sustainable development. Here, I interrogate some of the more sinister elements of Hurricane Katrina and the Greensburg tornado. I argue that after Katrina, environmental sustainability ironically becomes a

justification for forcibly removing (black and poor) residents from their homes and businesses. Hegemonic forces appropriate environmental justice discourses for their own ends, revealing how the politics of race, class, open space, and urban environment are constantly being reconstituted, renegotiated, and redefined.5 I conclude the chapter by comparing media coverage, or what Lefebvre would call representational spaces, of Greensburg and Katrina, highlighting the ways in which rhetorics of normalized whiteness and race and class-averse discourses shift focus away from social vulnerabilities in harmful ways.

The Spatial Turn and Soja's Spatial Justice

Edward Soja's *Spatial Justice* does a wonderful job of highlighting the different fragments leading to the "spatial turn" in critical spatial thinking across disciplines in the last few decades, building off his earlier works *Postmodern Geographies* and *Thirdspace*.[6] It is unnecessary to reproduce his work here, but I would like to highlight a few understandings of space that are particularly useful for my argument. Soja argues that space should not be seen simply as physical location or "an essential philosophical attribute of having absolute, relative, or relational dimensions."[7] Instead, "the spatiality of human life must be interpreted and understood as fundamentally, from the start, a complex social product, a collectively created and purposeful configuration and socialization of space that defines our contextual habitat, the human and humanized geography in which we live our lives."[8] Doreen Massey also offers a few key propositions to guide spatial inquiries. First, scholars interested in space must "recognize space as the product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny."[9] In other words, complex social factors, discourses, and material realities all influence and are influenced by space. Second, we must understand "space as the sphere of possibility of the existence of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality."

Third, we must recognize that "space is always under construction."[10] It is always political, and never fixed. For both Soja and Massey, space is created through social interaction, varies enormously in scope, and is constantly being made and remade. Finally, Elizabeth Grosz defines cities in productive ways for special justice. Cities are interactive networks, she argues, that bring together all sorts of economic and political power flows.[11] Grosz writes, "The city's form and structure provides the context in which social rules and expectations are internalized or habituated in order to ensure social conformity or, failing this, position social marginality at a safe distance (ghettoization). This means that the city must be seen as the most immediate locus for the production and circulation of power."[12]

In his recent exploration of the links between space and justice, Edward Soja builds from Henri Lefebvre and remarks that "justice, however it might be defined, has a *consequential geography*, a spatial expression that is more than just a background reflection or set of physical attributes to be descriptively mapped."[13] In other words, space is integral to how justice is socially constructed over time. Edward Said similarly argues that "none of us is free from the struggle over geography."[14] Soja makes the point that geographical space is not merely the *result* of social or political practices; when one embraces the "socio-spatial dialectic," it becomes clear that geographies also influence social and political discourses and processes. This is a far more assertive a claim than most critical geographers make, Soja argues, because they are afraid of entering the realm of environmental determinism. Instead, scholars (especially rhetorical scholars) view space as little more than a receptacle and focus on how race, class, discourse, or social stratification shape geographies, rather than how geographies and social processes are mutually constitutive. Put in rhetorical terms, Soja is arguing that space is rhetorical; the spatiality of social life actively creates, recreates, and maintains social phenomena such as

stratification, inequality, racism, and sexism. This is not merely an academic exercise; it is by interrogating spatial justice and stimulating new ways of thinking about space, Soja argues, that we can "change the unjust geographies in which we live."[15] This is precisely the goal of environmental justice activists. Soja divides spatial injustice into three interconnected, socially produced layers (see Table 1) and discusses examples of each and how they can be overcome, using the city of Los Angeles as his case study.

Table 1: Edward Soja's Multiscalar View of Spatial (In)justice

Levels of Geographic Resolution	Examples
MACRO: External creation of unjust geographies through boundary making and the political organization of space; Top-down	Electoral district gerrymandering South African Apartheid Sanctification of Private Property Gated Communities
MICRO: Distributional inequalities created through discriminatory decision making by individuals, firms, and/or institutions; Bottom-up	Siting of toxic facilities Restrictive racial segregation Exclusionary zoning
REGIONAL: Geographically uneven development; the globalization of injustice	Regional coalition building

Mustafa Dikec similarly explores the concept of spatial injustice, arguing that there is a dialectic between "the spatiality of injustice" and "the injustice of spatiality."[16] While the former focuses on how injustice is embedded in space, the later emphasizes how injustice is created and maintained through space. In both cases, the theorists do not intend to spend significant energy discussing the differences between discrete categories of spatial injustice, but to instead illustrate

that geographical struggles are multifaceted and exist in an array of interrelated contexts. Perhaps no movement has done as much to raise consciousness about the spatiality of injustice Soja and Dikec name as the Environmental Justice (EJ) movement.

Environmental Risk, Racism, and the Fight for Justice

It is nothing new to observe that race and environmental risk are inextricably linked. In *Toxic Tours*, Phaedra Pezzullo notes that as early as 1982, activists began working for "environmental justice" in North Carolina, when a toxic waste landfill was planned against the wishes of (mostly black, poor, and rural) local citizens.[17] These residents of Warren County, North Carolina were certain that the place for toxic waste disposal was chosen on political grounds, instead of ecological necessity, and the argument mirrors hundreds of others across the country. Elsewhere around the nation, grassroots environmental groups in minority communities began charging corporations with targeting their neighborhoods for dumping and pointing out government complicity in environmental inequity. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines environmental justice as "the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies."[18] This perspective sees the struggle for social justice as a contest over human geography. Environmental Justice (EJ) advocates remind us that the "environment" or "nature" is not separate from people.

An environmental justice perspective, Kevin DeLuca argues, is very different from the common and narrow definition of nature or the environment employed by mainstream environmental groups, such as the Sierra Club, who believe the environment is something to preserve and keep protected from human wreckage. DeLuca contends that "at the heart of nature,

we find 'whiteness,'" and he argues that whiteness as a central, invisible power has shaped environmental politics in America and blocks coalitions across race and class.[19] Using a frame of environmental justice, therefore, allows scholars to examine social and human aspects of the environment (and the environmental aspects of the social realm), something that is especially important in an urban environment such as New Orleans. Coalitions across race and class are made possible, even probable, when sustainability and environmental concern are framed as human rights issues, rather than issues of preservation or concerns of white elites.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Louisiana is ground zero of the EJ movement. The stretch of Louisiana between New Orleans and Baton Rouge is occupied by more than 125 chemical refineries and petrochemical production facilities. This area's multicultural heritage is often celebrated, and it is one of New Orleans' and southern Louisiana's largest tourist draws. However, it is also the site of a series of low-income, mostly African-American communities, and a part of the country with an overwhelming instance of both childhood and adult cancers. Activists in that area have renamed it "Cancer Alley" in an attempt to draw attention to the "environmental racism" this imbalance represents. EJ activists along the Gulf Coast are leaders in the larger national movement for environmental justice.

Cancer Alley represents what Robert Bullard describes as a "human sacrifice zone," what Mustafa Dikec calls *banlieues* or "badlands of the republic," and what Robert Higgins terms "appropriately polluted spaces" – places out of site, and therefore out of mind, where toxic contamination "belongs."[20] Environmental racism, then, refers to the phenomena whereby environmental pollutants, benefits, and risks are unequally distributed based upon race.[21] While no one has yet coined the term "environmental classism," (perhaps because minority communities overwhelming shoulder the burden of toxic waste and environmental injustice, and

because race and class are often so inextricably linked) it would indicate instances where environmental risks are unequally distributed based upon class or socio-economic status. While environmental racism is a fairly unexplored phenomenon in the communication field, three environmental communication scholars have explored instances of the phenomenon. Jennifer Peeples, for example, interrogates the public argument over the placement of a garbage incinerator in a poor Latino and African-American South-Central Los Angeles community in the late 1980s.[22] Peeples concludes that residents' labeling of their experience as "toxic racism" helped to "unfix" the predominant characterization of the neighborhood as an acceptable place for toxins.[23] Teresa L. Heinz, by contrast, is not so optimistic, and highlights how newspapers articulate environmental racism and environmental justice debates in problematic ways.[24] Specifically, she argues that mainstream media often portray activists speaking out against environmental racism as militant, violent, and extremist, which harmfully reinforces attitudes that minority neighborhoods are appropriate areas to place environmental pollutants.[25] Pezzullo observes that there is most often a large "psychological and geographical distance between dominant public culture and the cultures of those who live in places where both waste and people are articulated together as unnecessary, undesirable, and contaminating."[26] Instead of remaining hidden in its proper place, however, the Lower Ninth Ward was thrust into the spotlight in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, making one particular human sacrifice zone uncomfortably visible in the public sphere. Following Katrina's landfall, media outlets fell prey to environmental racism or classism when using images of (mostly black, almost always poor) citizens stranded on roofs or makeshift rafts, 'looting' for supplies (now accepted as largely myth), or trapped in the Superdome without food or water for days. The storm, however, was not the start of New Orleans' environmental, racial, or economic woes.

Social Vulnerability to Disaster in the L9W

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 28% of New Orleans families lived below the poverty line, and an overwhelming 84% of those were African American households.[27] Median household income in the city was $18,477, compared with $52,029 nationally, and the city suffered from a very high 12.4% unemployment rate.[28] One of the reasons for such a high unemployment rate was that New Orleans' economy was what might be described as "pre-industrial."[29] There were very few manufacturing jobs and many residents relied on volatile work with oilrigs and fishing vessels or seasonal work in the tourism industry. In an instance of what Robert Bullard dubs "transportation racism," 28% of the city relied entirely on an unreliable public transportation system according to the 2000 U.S. Census. One third of African American residents had no car.[30] Eighty percent of city residents fled during the storm, leaving twenty percent that included the elderly, and those who could not find a means of fleeing without private transportation in addition to residents who chose not to leave. That represents 120,000 at-risk residents, mostly poor and black, who could not flee the city without aid. Wealthier neighborhoods hired boats or private buses to evacuate residents.[31] However, in the Lower Ninth Ward, this was not a possibility. Lack of personal transportation was one of the largest disasters during mandatory evacuation, as the city sent only 64 buses (each with a 60 person capacity) to transport one quarter of the city's population. Some policy analysts estimate that 2000 buses at a minimum would have been necessary.[32] This is disturbing example of what Soja calls micro-level spatial injustice: essential transportation resources are not allocated fairly between different wards.[33]
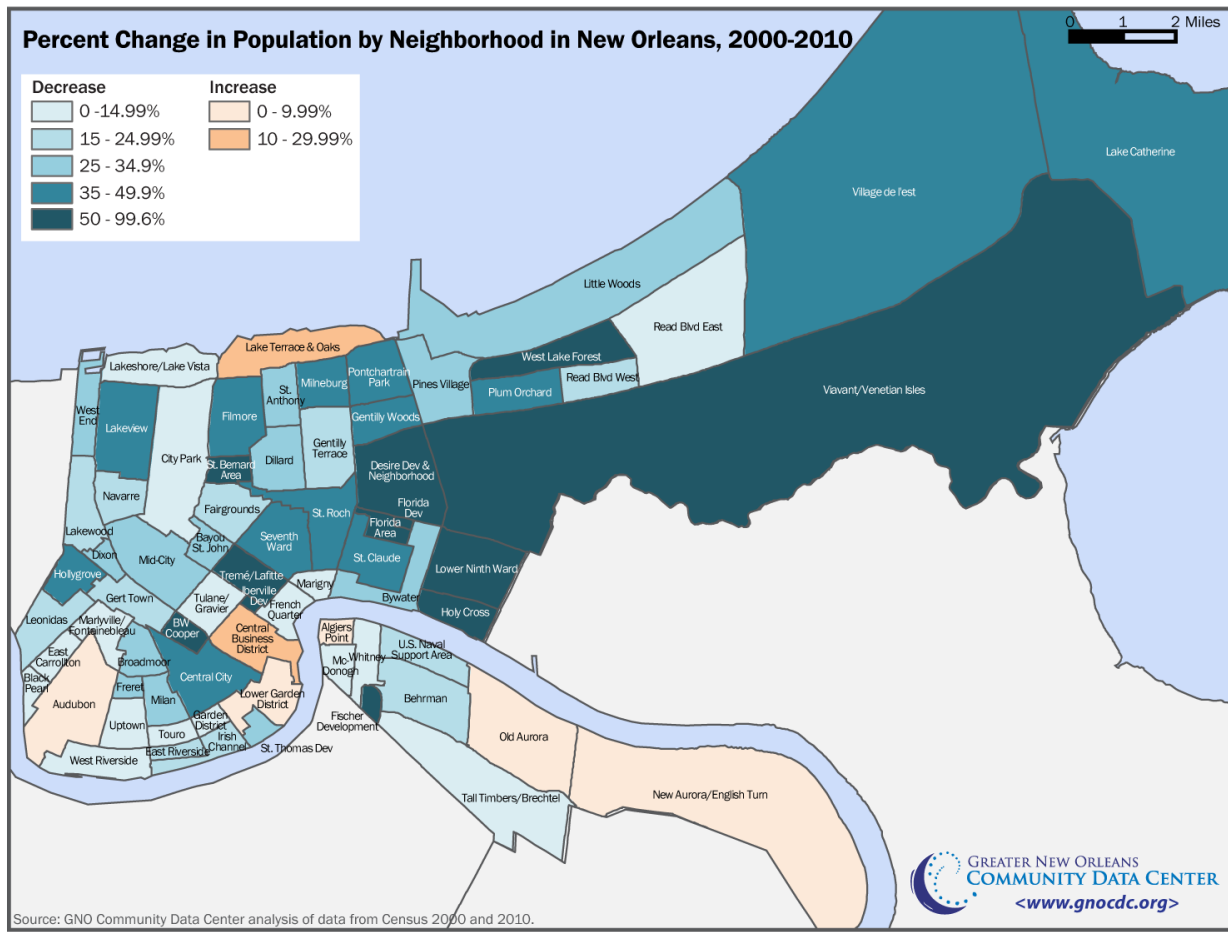
Fig. 4.1. Percent Change in Population by Neighborhood in New Orleans, 2000-2010. Image republished with the permission of GNOCDC.

Furthermore, New Orleans is the largest U.S. city to have virtually no design plan.[34] This lack of vision made it very easy for zoning officials and political figures to intentionally segregate the city for centuries, with minority groups and poor white immigrants relegated to the lowest lying wards and neighborhoods and the most undesirable areas near chemical plants or shipping yards. Macro-level spatial injustice included creative gerrymandering, and systems to create and maintain separate but unequal neighborhoods for blacks and whites had been in position for hundreds of years before Katrina made landfall. Additionally, the lack of central city design made reliance on public transportation more of a burden, as the city is not well laid out for efficient mass transit. Lack of preliminary planning also allowed large oil and chemical firms

to build haphazardly and without regulation. Land use policy and zoning laws were virtually

nonexistent, resulting in an overwhelming loss of barrier wetlands (which naturally guard from

storm surges) and dangerous waste disposal practices.[35]
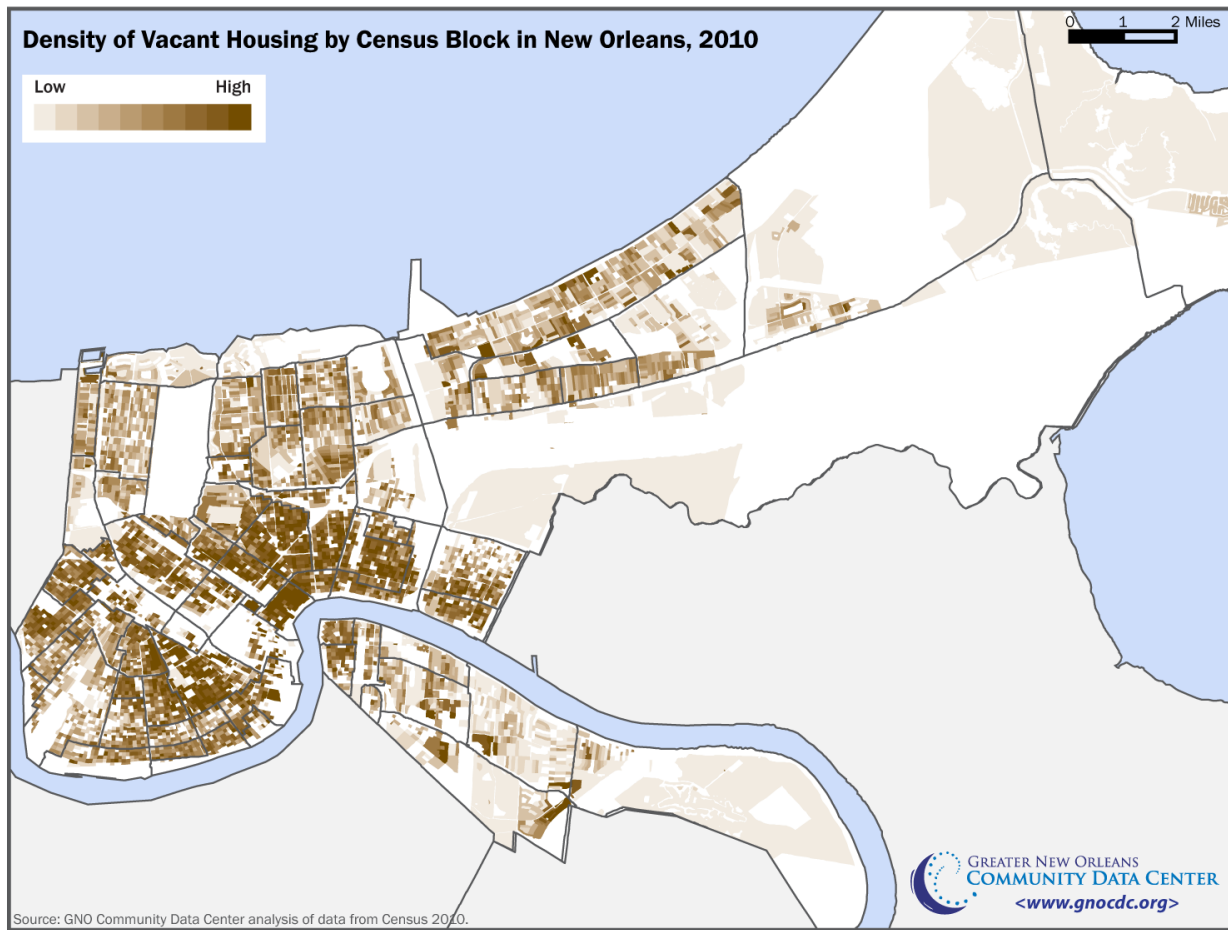
Fig 4.2. Density of Vacant Housing by Ward. Republished with the permission of GNOCDC.

Before Hurricane Katrina, few Americans had ever heard of the Lower Ninth Ward. After

the storm, L9W become a nationally recognized symbol of destruction, vulnerability, urban

poverty, and racial injustice. However, this was not always the case. Before Hurricane Betsy in

1965, the L9W had a much more diverse population and comprised a multiracial middle class

neighborhood. A combination of white flight to suburbs in the 1960s and a large portion of

(white) families who did not return after Betsy (the overall city population decreased by 22%

after the storm) meant that by 2000, 90% of the Lower Ninth Ward was African American. The poverty rate (at 36%) was three times the national average, and ten percent higher than New Orleans as a whole. In a commonly stated statistic, the L9W has a murder rate fifteen times higher than New York City.[36] This picture of the Lower Ninth, however, is not without its dissenters.
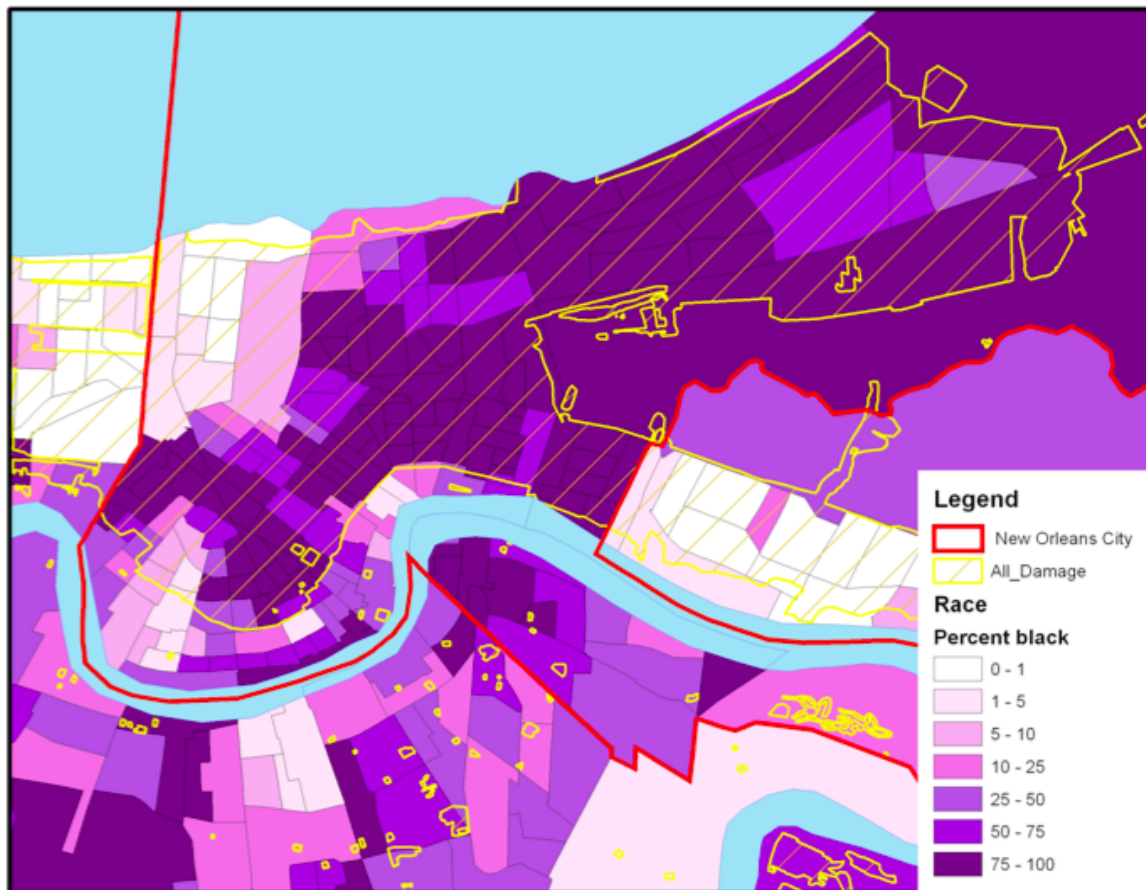
Fig. 4.3. Race and Damage By Neighborhood in New Orleans. Reproduced with permission of GNOCDC.

It seems in both media coverage and the words of city residents, there are two Ninth Wards: one blighted by poverty and crime and one bolstered by multi-generational ties, cultural vitality, and proud home ownership. Many residents emphasize that in the 1940s and 1950s, the neighborhood offered cheap land where the upwardly mobile black family could build their own

home in peace. The neighborhood has active roots in the civil rights movement, acting as the staging point for school desegregation in New Orleans. It also has cultural and architectural claims to fame, such as being the birthplace of musicians Fats Domino and Kermit Ruffins, and being home to the historic steamboat-style homes in the Holy Cross District.

Fig. 4.4. One of the many steamboat houses in Holy Cross. Photograph by Katherine Cruger, June 16, 2010.

In the words of one L9W resident interviewed after the storm, " I know a lot of people say they don't like the Ninth Ward, but it was beautiful to me."[37] "It's a scrappy place where people don't take a lot of guff, but a place where people really respect each other," said Pam Dashiell, president of the Holy Cross Neighborhood Association.[38] "It has heart and soul and beauty."[39] Another resident describes the Ninth Ward longshoremen of the 1950s and 1960s as "the backbone of the city," adding proudly that "it was their sweat that made New Orleans."[40] As

Juliette Landphair points out, these two pictures of the L9W are hardly incompatible. She writes, "the area's unsteady terrain and social marginalization encouraged the development of close-knit communities of people who helped create New Orleans, yet those very geological, economic, and social vulnerabilities present enormous obstacles to residents' returning, despite their desire to do so."[41] The communal struggle over geography, in other words, can be used to build solidarity, but oppression and exploitation still exists.

As stated above, the geography of environmental risk and race and poverty often mirror one another. In the water-starved South West, the phrase "water flows uphill toward money" is ubiquitous and indicates that, where water is scarce, the wealthy have the best and cheapest access to it. In New Orleans, however, the opposite is the case – water flows away from money, meaning that generally, the poor and the African American residents inhabited the areas with the most flood risk.[42] In most analysis and planning efforts after the storm, however, only the geographic risks were highlighted and addressed. As Susan Cutter explains:

> Socially created vulnerabilities are largely ignored in the hazards and disaster literature ...
> Social vulnerability is partially a product of social inequalities—those social factors and
> forces that create the susceptibility of various groups to harm, and in turn affect their
> ability to respond, and bounce back (resilience) after the disaster.[43]

Unfortunately, flood was not the only socio-environmental risk faced in the Lower Ninth Ward community. Childhood lead poisoning in black neighborhoods of New Orleans effected as much as 67% of the population.[44] According to the Environmental Justice and Climate Change Initiative's (EJCC) 2002 report, "people of color are concentrated in urban centers in the South, coastal regions, and areas with substandard air quality. New Orleans, which is 62 percent African-American and two feet below sea level on average [the lower ninth ward is ten feet below sea level], exemplifies the severe and disproportionate impacts of climate change in the U.S."[45]

The history and social vulnerabilities of Greensburg, Kansas are very different to those faced in the Ninth Ward. While New Orleans bustled in the 1700s as a port and slave trade post, Greensburg was not established until 1886. It was a stop on the stagecoach line and then on the railroad, boasting the world's largest hand dug well as the town's claim to fame. As explored in chapter three, Greensburg was a rural farming community that, before the storm, was experiencing a loss of economic stability as so many rural towns are across the nation. Greensburg was losing residents each year; most young people left town immediately after highschool. While media coverage and residents describe themselves as "just your average one-stoplight town," or middle class, but according to U.S. Census data, median income is well below state or national averages. Median household income before the storm, for example, was $28,438 and median per capita income was $18,054, compared with $40,624 and $20,506 averages for the state.[46] While that is certainly higher than the median household income of New Orleans of $18,477, it is still half of the national average. Furthermore, urban centers tend to have significantly higher costs of living that rural communities, lessening the gap between Greensburg residents and New Orleanians. According to the Kiowa County tornado history project, 53 tornados hit Kiowa County since 1956.[47] While only the Greensburg tornado resulted in fatalities, many caused injuries and the majority of the tornados caused structural damage, totaling in the billions of dollars over the last sixty years.

Appropriation of Environmental Justice

There are many documented cases of the mobilization of social justice or environmental justice discourses by dominant groups to further their own ends. Julie Sze, for example, argues that the siting of a professional sports stadium in a predominantly black neighborhood of Brooklyn is framed by developers as a so-called "environmental good" when the reality is quite a

bit more complicated.[48] Similarly, Phaedra Pezzullo explains that one of the impediments cancer activists face in their quest to emphasis cancer prevention through the elimination of toxic waste is ironically the success of the environmental movement in the United States.[49] Corporate greenwashing (which refers not only to the deceptive labeling of consumer products as green, but also to the deliberate downplaying of environmental dangers) has become so prevalent, she argues, that the pharmaceutical company behind National Breast Cancer Awareness Month pretends to care about human and environmental health, while actually producing and profiting from environmental carcinogens.[50]

In the case of New Orleans after Katrina, the majority of sustainable development projects have been a public good for local communitites. However, in the cases of some city planning and development firms, concerns about sustainability and conservation are ironically positioned as rationale for discriminatory choices in urban development. Here, I focus on two examples. First, city planners focus on metaphoric cleansing of "blight" in the Ninth Ward and other black, poor neighborhoods in the city, but ignore the material needs for literal cleansing of toxic materials. Second, planners emphasize the need for sustainable barriers against storm surges, but the put into practice, this policy would prevent (mostly black and poor) New Orleanians from returning to their neighborhoods or rebuilding their homes. Both of these examples represent micro-level spatial inequity and illustrate the close relationship between race, space, and injustice.

Metaphoric Cleansing versus Material Cleansing

Following the storm, New Orleans faced environmental blight of an extent never before seen in the United States. Sixty three million cubic yards of debris covered Louisiana, with another 62.5 million cubic yards blanketing Mississippi. Most topsoil was toxic, and needed to

be removed with hazard equipment before rebuilding efforts could begin. Flood waters were quickly renamed "toxic soup," and were packed with rotting bodies, oil, and hazardous waste materials. Residents of the Lower Ninth Ward were the last people allowed to return to the city because of the extensive damage and high flood waters, but even with a 180 day delay, many environmental groups feel local government failed to adequately inform the public about the health risks of returning.[51] Although the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) tested for air, water, and soil pollutants, their methods were criticized by other environmental organizations such as the National Resources Defense council who felt the EPA sample size was far too small in scope and that EPA agents had not tested for a wide enough range of chemicals.[52] Mayor Nagin also requested of the EPA that they conduct more complete environmental tests, especially in the Lower Ninth Ward, citing concern about environmental risks as one of the reasons why residents could not permanently resettle in that part of the city.[53] However, uniform clean-up standards were not applied citywide. White, wealthy neighborhoods were fully cleaned while many black residential areas were either partially cleaned, or not cleaned at all by city officials.[54] Partially, this discrepancy was due to early redevelopment plans that slated many black, poor neighborhoods for conversion to industrial parks or suggested that they be reclaimed by swampland.[55] As a result, the cleanup standards for industrial areas after a disaster, not residential areas, were considered acceptable. Additionally, the discrepancy was due to the fact that many wards were responsible for paying for their own cleanup, and poorer neighborhoods could not afford the best option. When displaced residents tried to return home to salvage possessions or repair damage, many suffered from "Katrina Cough" due to the dust and mold that blanketed the disaster area. Katrina Cough affected asthma sufferers most harshly, and asthma, in turn, disproportionately affects black Americans.

Interestingly, while city officials seemed relatively unconcerned about physically cleaning nonwhite and poor neighborhoods, many officials saw this disaster as a way to make New Orleans smaller, more upscale, and less "blighted." In an interview with *The New York Times*, Mayor Nagin boasts, "This city for the first time that anyone can probably imagine is drug free and crime free and we are intent on keeping it that way."[56] One business owner in the French Quarter, interviewed in *Newsweek,* shamelessly suggests that the Lower Ninth Ward be transformed into a golf course, justifiable because he "heard that in Gaelic, 'Katrina' means 'to purify.'"[57] Once again, the opportunity topos of resiliency rhetoric manifests in discussion of the possibilities afforded by disaster. While the interviewed man never mentions race or class, cultural discourses associating whiteness with purity and blackness with dirt, pollution, and filth date back centuries.[58]
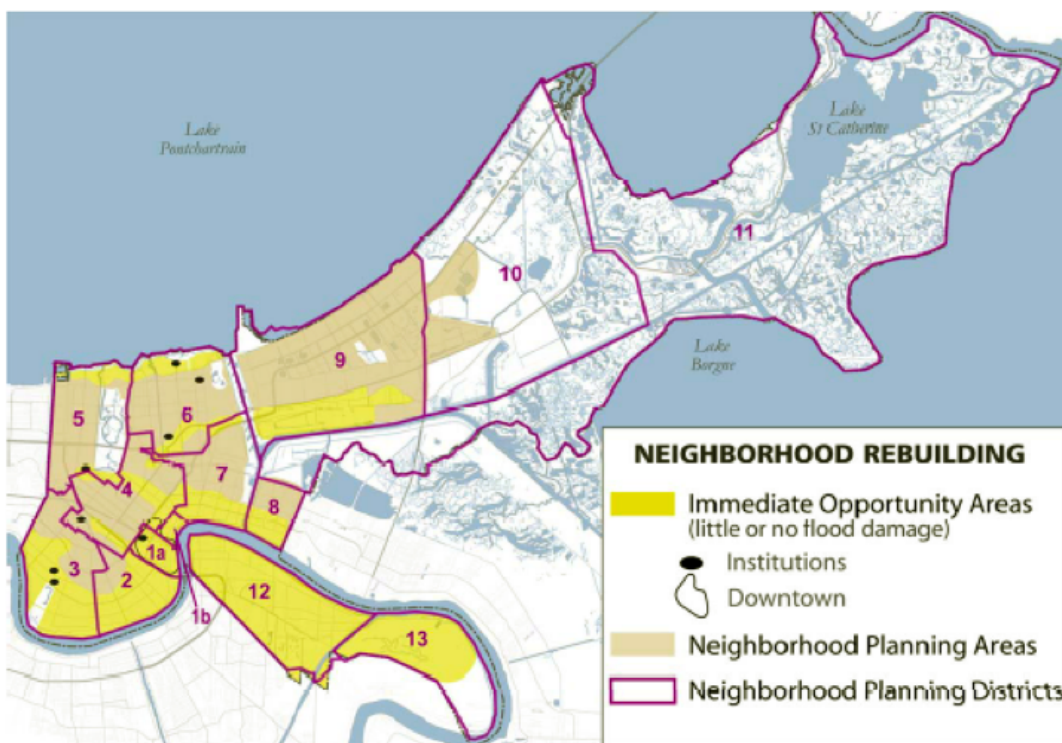
Fig. 4.5. Map of Immediate Opportunity Areas vs. Neighborhood Planning Areas in the BNOB Plan.

The Mayor's Institute on City Design published plans to convert older (almost exclusively African American) public housing developments into luxury condos, to open the city to casino gambling to increase tourism, and to declare (historically black) neighborhoods as "pockets of poverty," that needed to be "cleaned out" to make room for New Urban developments.[59] According to one investigative reporter, "members of high-level commissions and even Mayor Nagin told me again and again that the Lower Ninth Ward was 'over,' that it was 'a new day,' and that people needed to accept that 'certain neighborhoods' would never come back."[60] Congressman Richard Baker of Baton Rouge was overheard telling lobbyists in Washington that, "we finally cleaned up public housing. We couldn't do it, but God did."[61] Indeed, only four public housing projects reopened after the storm. One, Iberville, is located two blocks from the French Quarter and Canal Street, and as such sits on a coveted piece of real estate. Developers quickly began submitting proposals to "clean up" the area to make it more tourist friendly.[62]

Thirty-eight thousand New Orleanians depended on public housing before the storm, but traditional public housing has fallen out of vogue, in favor of mixed income and mixed use models.[63] Serviceable and undamaged public housing projects were torn down after the storm as part of a "new New Orleans," at a time when affordable housing was scarce. The National Fair Housing Alliance (2005) published a report in 2005 that proved there were high rates of housing discrimination suffered by black victims of Katrina, and that nonwhite New Orleanians were far more vulnerable to permanent displacement than their white counterparts. Studies also show that black residents are more likely to be underinsured, be victims of insurance fraud, and be denied loans to rebuild, even in the case of federal loans.[64] Public officials ignore the need for cleaning up toxic debris after Katrina, but actively pursue symbolic cleansing of undesirable residents,

disregarding the micro and macro level spatial injustices that prevent these residents from finding new homes. Despite these facts, the racial dimensions of the rebuilding "unofficial plan" are glossed over; propositions are framed as "engineering" realities rather than social or political choices. One such engineering reality is framed by planners and city officials as the need for sustainable resettlement.

Sustainable Settlement Patterns

Ironically, many of the environmental issues nonwhite, poor neighborhoods faced, issues overlooked by the city before the storm, such as inadequate infrastructure and flood risk, became rationale for bulldozing these communities in the plans for rebuilding after Katrina. One recovery plan, proposed by *GreeNOLA,* specifically advocates responsible "green" and "sustainable" development and argues that the goal is to be, "smarter, greener, and better than we were before."[65] This *GreeNOLA* plan's first recommendation insists that, "In New Orleans, sustainable development means establishing resilient settlement patterns based on a thorough understanding of flood risk." The most responsible course of action, many experts insist, is "to concentrate the city's rebuilding efforts in the highest and most sustainable parts of New Orleans."[66] While this statement does make sense simply in terms of physical geography ("don't allow citizens to rebuild in flood-prone areas"), in actuality, it means something very different for social geography, because the condemned neighborhoods are those largely populated by black or poor New Orleanians. Components of social vulnerability become all the more clear when one learns that predominantly white neighborhoods which were also low-lying and just as prone to flooding (such as wealthy Lakeview) were never threatened with the possibility that they would not be coming back.[67]

"Sustainable Storm Protection" was also proposed in the wake of Katrina, when planners pointed out that natural defenses to hurricanes, such as the bayous, had been irresponsibly settled by residents and destroyed by heavy industry. While these planners are correct in their assertion that poor land use practices robbed the Gulf Coast of its natural storm barriers, they seem to ignore that many poor and minority residents were quite literally forced to settle in low lying areas. In the months following the storm, there was much debate about whether the Lower Ninth Ward should "return to its natural state: swamp."[68] This transcendent argument is effective because it equates displacing residents with restoring what is "natural" about New Orleans. This is a perfect example of DeLuca's distinction between the mainstream environmental movement's narrow understanding of nature as separate and in need of protection from people, and the environmental justice movement's emphasis on the human and social aspects of nature or the environment.[69]

By focusing on reverence for the natural, corporations and public officials with social and economic agendas are able to argue for the removal of black, undesirable bodies from a particular space without referencing people at all, under the guise of environmental responsibility. Lefebvre's representational spaces and spaces of representation bulldoze (literally and figuratively) the lived spatial practices of black and poor New Orleanians. In *Hurricane on the Bayou*, an IMAX film shown at New Orleans' Audubon Nature Institute since December of 2006, narrator Meryl Streep insists that rebuilding the city "will demand sacrifices" and "some longtime residents will have to move to higher ground."[70] Presented by the weather channel, the film focuses almost exclusively on wetlands restoration as the hope of the future. While wetland depletion is of crucial concern along the Louisiana coastline, *Hurricane on the Bayou* does not present the complex human geography of the region, or share experiences of New Orleanians

who dwell in low-lying areas. Instead, the film's narrative insists that a sustainable future

"demands" displacement as human sacrifice to the natural.[71]

Wetlands restoration discourses are not the only incidence of "environmental

sustainability" being used as justification for environmental racism or classism. An emphasis on

"green" or "open" space in rebuilding plans also provided city officials with a rationale for

wiping away black or poor communities. This is similar to the argument that low-lying

neighborhoods must be eliminated in the name of wetlands restoration, but with a subtle

difference. The City's Bring New Orleans Back (BNOB) Commission outlined a number of

tentative plans for what to do with neighborhoods that did not make the grade, including letting

them be reclaimed by the wetlands in the name of environmental restoration, turning the L9W

into "green space," or designating it as an industrial park. In their final plan, architects ask

readers to "Imagine a Better World," which will include "parks and open space: sustainable

nature in every neighborhood." While this plan meant the incorporation of city park areas into

white and wealthy neighborhoods, a closer look at the plan reveals that the Lower Ninth Ward in

its entirety was to become "open space." The L9W is set into a deep land depression and is

surrounded on three sides by industrial canals and the Mississippi River. It would therefore cease

to exist if the plan to "reuse canals (sic) edges and canal levees as open space" came to fruition.[72]

In the original BNOB document, only 17 neighborhoods were determined to be worth

repopulating, and, they represented the most affluent, those with the largest tourist draw, and

those with the whitest residents. According to one Ninth Ward resident interviewed by CNN,

"When they started talking about all of the areas that were going to be green space, those were

all of your black neighborhoods."[73] Planners highlight the need for green space to improve

quality of life and promote sustainable development, without addressing the fact that sacrificial

spaces were predominantly nonwhite.

Comparing Media Narratives (Representational Spaces) of Greensburg and the Lower

Ninth Ward of New Orleans

This song is dedicated to the one wit the suit
Thick white skin and his eyes bright blue
So called beef wit you know who
Fuck it he just let him kill all of our troops
Look at the bullshit we been through
Had the niggas sittin on top they roofs
Hurricane Katrina, we shoulda called it Hurricane (Georgia)
Bush.

Then they telling y'all lies on the news
The white people smiling like everythin cool
But I know people that died in that pool
I know people that died in them schools
Now what is the survivor to do?
Got no trailer, you gotta move.
Now it's on to Texas and to (Georgia)

They tell you what they want, show you what they want you to see
But they don't let you know what's really goin on
Boy them cops is killas in my home
Nigga shot dead in the middle of the street
I ain't no thief, I'm jus tryin to eat
Man, fuck the police and president (Georgia) Bush
     -Lil Wayne

Entitled "Georgia (Bush)," the above song appears on Lil' Wayne's popular 2006

mixtape, *Dedication 2*. In the track, Lil Wayne, "born and bred in New Orleans," unabashedly

broaches complex issues of racial discrimination, bigoted portrayals of New Orleanians in the

media, displacement in the wake of disaster, police brutality, social elements of vulnerability,

and anger at the Bush administration for its disregard for black Americans in Katrina and in the

War on Terror. While Lil Wayne and other pop culture figures such as Kanye West openly (and

resentfully) addressed the racial dimensions of Hurricane Katrina, this "frank discussion about

race," as President Obama put it in his "A More Perfect Union" Speech was not common in

media coverage of the storm and its aftermath. Race is a taboo subject in contemporary society,

argues Robert Terrill, because we have no language "for moving ourselves across the racial folds

creased into the fabric of our public culture through centuries of distrust and oppression."[74] Even

bell hooks remarks:

> I find myself reluctant to 'talk race' because it hurts. It is painful to think long and hard about race and racism in the United States. Confronting the great resurgence of white supremacist organizations and seeing the rhetoric and beliefs of these groups surface as part of accepted discourse in every aspect of daily life in the United States startles, frightens, and is enough to throw one back into silence.[75]

Terrill argues that citizens tend either to project a naïve colorblindness or to naturalize the color

line as an impermeable boundary. Nowhere is this tendency more apparent than in the media

coverage of the two cases discussed in this dissertation: Greensburg and the Lower Ninth Ward.

While critical geographers remind is that space is always raced, classed, and gendered, the

representations of space surrounding Greensburg and the Lower Ninth Ward seek to wipe social

vulnerability away or repackage uncomfortable racial dimensions in neutrality. Greensburg,

Kansas and the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans share a number of similarities. In both places,

a natural disaster destroyed a community, and federal, non-profit, and corporate sponsorship

were all made use of in recovery. Both disasters were featured prominently in official discourses

of the media and presidential rhetoric. However, it is perhaps their differences that are more

telling. While the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans is southern, urban, working class with a

high instance of poverty, and predominantly black, Greensburg, Kansas is rural, midwestern,

self-identified as middle-class, and almost exclusively white. I argue that these differences,

especially racialized difference, have influenced how the media and public officials speak of the

two disasters in ways that demand exploration.

Theories of Race in a post-Civil Rights Era: New Racism, Whiteness, and Race-Averse

Discourse

Much has been written about the cultural desire for a "post-racial" society, where race no longer matters and discrimination based upon racial markers is no longer a problem. This narrative of American identity, however, masks a number of underlying effects of white privilege and racial inequality. After the destruction and mishandling of disaster in a city overwhelmingly inhabited by black people, many of whom were poor, "questions about race, social justice, housing patterns, and government neglect surfaced repeatedly in the news."[76] One reaction and response on the part of media professionals to accusations of racism was to evoke this post-racial discourse, denying that racism played a factor in the handling of Katrina and scolding public figures who issued charges of racism as irresponsible. Even among those who believed there was a racial aspect to Katrina, they often tiptoed around the issue and spoke in euphemism rather than making claims outright. Feminist geographers Kobayashi and Peake argue that these rhetorical strategies are in keeping with a "new racism," which emphasizes color-blindness, and therefore delegitimizes the discussion of any discrimination. Audrey Kobayashi and Linda Peake explain:

> The new racist argument goes as follows: racism is no longer acceptable in modern society; to talk about racism is therefore to make an accusation of behavior that goes against social norms; those who talk about racism therefore seek either to cause trouble or to displace the blame for a given social condition from some other cause, such as culture or poverty.[77]

Indeed, Kanye West's outburst on live TV insisting that "George Bush doesn't care about black people" met significant resistance in the popular press and triggered a partisan firestorm. Former-president Bush later wrote in his memoir that Kanye's remarks made him "disgusted," "deeply insulted," and that the incident was the lowest point in his presidency.[78] This was the sound byte

widely focused upon during Bush's press tour, where he implied repeatedly that being accused of being racist was unthinkable, hurtful, and shockingly inappropriate.

The danger of a simplistic understanding of racism as overt bigotry, Kobayashi and Peake insist, is that it fails to address the fact that racism is not always intentional or overt; "new racism" can be social, systemic, institutional, and so deeply ingrained in historical patterns of race-based inequity that peeling back the layers and revealing the source becomes nearly impossible. Nils Gilman argues:

> One of the most fundamental problems with the discussion of racism in the United States today is the tendency (most commonly found, it must be said, on the political right and among whites) to equate racism with *racial prejudice*. People of this persuasion define racism as being identical to (and, crucially, limited to) *ethnophobia*—that is, disdain for other people on the basis of their supposed racial characteristics. In this definition, racism is not a social condition but rather is something that exists *in the minds of 'racists.'*[79]

In other words, new racism lacks people to easily mark or vilify as racists. Gilman elaborates that social and institutional structures can be "bearers of the racist past, even though they may today no longer be populated by active bigots. This social and economic exclusion on the basis of race is what "racism" is really all about."[80] Many other social scientists have similarly attempted to put a name to post-Civil Rights Era racial prejudice; other names for new racism include symbolic racism (a combination of anti-black sentiment learned as a child coupled with the sense that black Americans violate the common values of individualism and self-reliance), modern racism (a combination of contradictory beliefs that racism is a thing of the past and that nonwhites are pushing too hard for equality), ideological refinement (high support for the principle of equality, but low support for government intervention to reduce inequality), and laissez-faire racism (belief in anti-black stereotypes, blaming the socially vulnerable for their own misfortune, and neoliberal resistance to active policies which might reduce inequality.)[81] All of these theoretical concepts emphasize the neoliberal roots of contemporary prejudice – if the

free market results in minority populations making less money and have a lower quality of life, the logic goes, then that is fair and just; they have simply not worked hard enough. These theories all also emphasize that prejudice can be implicit rather than explicit – sometimes racist ideals or behaviors can be unconscious.

Quillian notes that in the majority of the post-Civil Rights theories of racism, the word "racism" can be replaced by prejudice or discrimination without loss of meaning, but with the result that the discourse is less polarizing or offensive to potential readers.[82] Indeed, when I told colleagues that I wanted to investigate the presence of "new racism" in media coverage of Katrina and Greensburg, most cringed at the thought. Many felt I would be unfair to my subjects by implying that there were racist underpinnings to the events surrounding their recovery, despite the fact that the phenomenon of new racism is meant to indicate prejudice without a racist perpetrator and the presence of often-unconscious institutional attitudes and policy that perpetuates racial inequality. I considered moving forward with a staunch new racist theoretical frame anyway; in a sense, I felt the race-averse discourses of my colleagues (many of whom told me this was "dangerous territory") was actually evidence that new racist attitudes had permeated even the academy. In the end, however, I decided to take a colleague's advice and discuss what I saw in the discourse instead of what was lacking; presence instead of the deconstructionist problem of attending to absences.

In *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Geography of Race*, Ruth Frankenberg seeks to understand, through interview and ethnographic research, the range of possible meanings of whiteness, race, and racism in the contemporary United States.[83] Frankenberg explores the "social geography of race," or "how physical space was divided and who inhabited it."[84] "*Racial* social geography, in short, refers to the racial and ethnic mapping of environments in physical

and social terms and enables also the beginning of an understanding of the conceptual mappings of self and other," she explains.[85] Frankenberg makes a number of key observances that serve as a useful framework to show the complexity of racial discourse in contemporary America, the intersectionality of race and class, and, building upon spatial justice and critical geography scholarship, the spatial elements of race. First, she acknowledges that talking about class is complicated, "an emotional and rhetorical as well as objective process."[86] One of the reasons why it is nearly impossible to isolate one aspect of social vulnerability (class) from others (race, gender, etc.) is that these different identities intersect with one another in complex ways. Most often, Frankenberg notes, "the assertion of middle class status was at times a metaphor for race privilege."[87] Second, Frankenberg highlights the predominance of "color – and power – evasive discourse on race."[88] As I observe in this study, the dominant public language of race is evasion, and as most rhetorical scholars understand, particular discourses on race "construct zones of silence, repression, and taboo."[89] Frankenburg writes, "there are apparently only two options open to white women: either one does not have anything to say about race, or one is apt to be deemed 'racist' simply by virtue of having something to say."[90] I would extend this observation to white Americans more generally. Frankenburg's project seeks to make visible and analyze the racial structuring of white experience. It then becomes possible, she argues, "to begin examining the ways racism as a system shaped…daily environments, and to begin thinking about the social, political, and historical forces that brought those environments into being."[91] Frankenberg's third contribution to my study, therefore, is an observation that all landscapes are racially structured, whether marked by the predominant presence or absence of people of color. Racism is not just an ideology or political orientation picked up or discarded at will, she argues, but also "a system of material relationships with a set of ideas linked to and embedded in those material

relationships."[92] Finally, Frankenberg's work is unique in that it engages discourses of whiteness and racism or discrimination in conjunction with one another.

Whiteness studies is often positioned as an offshoot of critical race studies, which is focused on the social construction of race, segregation, and discrimination.[93] This is a fairly new area of inquiry, because the power of whiteness comes from its simultaneous pervasiveness and invisibility – whiteness is everywhere, and at the same time hidden. Whiteness studies insists that white is a color and a race, one with great privilege which must be investigated and eventually dismantled. One goal of whiteness studies is to make whiteness visible in everyday life, because it so often remains invisible, even as it is normalized. As Ferguson reminds us, "the place from which power is exercised is often a hidden place."[94] In the same way Judith Butler argues gender is not marked until it is performed in a manner other than the heterosexual norm, whiteness scholars note that race is also not noted unless performed differently from the white norm.[95]

Nakayama and Krisek argue that "particularizing whiteness" will help in the project of understanding and dismantling whiteness as a system of domination.[96] A number of scholars have attempted to answer this call.[97] For example, Christina Stage engages in what she calls an "indigenous analysis" of a rural, all-white small town in America, with the goals of explicitly studying white culture and its relationship to power and privilege, as well as gaining insight into how "this segment of our population views its position within the center of society."[98] She notes that in narratives of town history, economic growth, and prosperity, there are no references to race or ethnicity – white privilege is simply taken for granted. It is so essential that critical race scholars, geographers, and rhetoricians interrogate these normalizing moves because it is by characterizing their actions as 'normal' that groups maintain privilege. Ideally, uncovering practices of "actively racializing space could upset embedded systems of dominance and

oppression."[99] Meredith Reitman interrogates the creation and maintenance of white places in the workplace. She argues that white places are formed through a process of whitewashing, "which simultaneously denies race and superimposes white culture."[100]

Nakayama and Krisek offer six communication strategies which serve to hide whiteness in a strategic, performative way, including the association of white skin with power, speaking of whiteness as a lack of race or ethnicity, the use of science to naturalize whiteness, claiming colorblindness, and claiming European origins to mask race with other demographic information.[101]

I argue that in the wake of Hurricane Katrina and the Greensburg tornado, normalized rhetorics of whiteness are coupled with race averse discourses (be they deemed new racist, modern racist, or prejudice) in media coverage of the two events. According to Kobayashi and Peake, "what this means in the context of Hurricane Katrina coverage is that an emergent idea ("race is over") actually stimulates old assumptions ("there is something wrong about African American culture") to reinforce stereotypes in a way that is not immediately recognizable as the old racism."[102] While prejudice is pervasive and can be articulated in countless different ways, I will highlight three rhetorical strategies of race-averse discourse and whiteness clearly in play in the coverage and public discourse surrounding Hurricane Katrina and, more specifically, the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans. I argue that race-averse discourse and whiteness are two sides of the same coin, each reinforcing the other.

Skirting the Issue – Race Aversion in Katrina Discourse

Brad Pitt, as founder of the Make It Right Foundation, has been interviewed dozens of times by the popular press about his efforts to provide sustainable and affordable homes in the Lower Ninth Ward. In every interview, when asked whether the injustice is racially motivated,

Pitt uncomfortably shifts the frame. In one typical interview, he responds: "[Katrina] certainly

illuminated…If I'm going to be polite about it, a portion of our society that is being undervalued

and still being undervalued."[103] Here he defers to politeness, political correctness, not wanting to

accuse anyone (especially not potential donors to his organization) of something like racism,

which goes against societal norms. His unspecific references to "a portion of our society that is

being undervalued" leaves space for interpretation. Viewers may assume, based upon their own

experiences, that he means black people, poor people, Southern people, or New Orleanians more

generally. Because playing "the race card" effectively shuts down the conversation, Pitt and

others advocating for change strategically sidestep the uncomfortable issue while still getting

their point across in a coded way.

Brian Williams acts similarly when he is asked to speak frankly about Katrina five years

later on the Charlie Rose Show. When asked point blank whether racism played a role in the

mishandling of Katrina, Williams replies, "Let's put it by a kinder and more benign term, and

maybe it was a misunderstanding of the needs of urban America, the inner city, and in this case

one of the great cities on the entire planet, would have when the levees broke and when the

power went off and when all human services ceased to function. I would love people to watch

this and make their own judgment."[104] Again, accusations of racial discrimination are tempered

with the gentle assertion that it could have been due to "misunderstanding." Additionally,

euphemisms for black people such as "urban America" or "the inner city" are employed to

replace a racial marker with a geographic one. Dreama Moon argues that euphemisms function

to mask the facts of domination, rendering them harmless "while enabling whitepeople freely to

express racism – in coded ways – as a signal of white solidarity."[105] This is perhaps too harsh an

explanation for why Williams and other Americans employ euphemisms or race-averse

discourses. A more charitable read, using the work of Frankenberg and Gilman, might see

euphemisms as a way of either (1) pointing to racial markers in a culturally acceptable way or

(2) denying that racial markers are important, indicating one's modern and forward-thinking

"colorblindness." The coding of "urban" to mean "black" was indeed a common euphemism. In

one article published immediately after the storm, the Bush administration's poor response was

attributed to "Mr Bush receiv[ing] few urban votes" and therefore ignoring "urban"

populations.[106] Similarly, when there are discussions about bulldozing homes in the poor (black)

parts of town, it is called "urban" renewal, a code for gentrification.[107]

In a piece in *The Capital Times*, one reporter notes that the Lower Ninth Ward is a

neighborhood that possesses racial markings. He offers remarks about the poor response from

government officials, but he stops just short of linking the two points. The reporter writes,

"Families lived here for generations because it was one of the few neighborhoods in New

Orleans where blacks were permitted to live." Later, he attacks officials on the basis of either

their "malice or incompetence." The malice, however, goes unspecified.

FOXNews coverage of Katrina, featured considerable discussion of accusations of

racism, especially those verbalized by Kanye West. The following excerpt is a representative

response:

> No, you know, I mean, Kanye West, I mean, he's got a record out. I think it's called "Late Registration." I think he's late to this party. He doesn't understand what's going on here.
>
> If you even took a glimpse inside the White House, you were seeing the president's top domestic policy advisor, Claude Allen, is a black man. I mean, the secretary of housing and urban development, Alphonso Jackson, is a black man, who was traveling with the president, went down there with him twice.
>
> So what you have to understand is you have a secretary of state that's black. This is a clear sense of black people in this administration, in this government all around who would have been yelling "fire" if they thought that this was about race.
>
> What it was about, I think, was *ineptitude*.[108]

Here, those who suggest a racial dimension to Katrina are disciplined, accused of playing "the race card," and sternly assured that the disastrous response was due to "ineptitude" or "incompetence," but certainly not "a race issue."[109] Furthermore, tokenism is often employed to prove that the Bush administration could not possibly be discriminatory: how could they be when they approved a black secretary of state? Presently, similar post-racist arguments are made claiming that the election of Barack Obama as president proves race is no longer important. Skirting the issue of racial prejudice, however, is not the only race-averse strategy employed in news coverage of disaster.

In Greensburg, an adaptive version of "colorblindness" comes into play; white and rural identity is conflated, so that race is framed and seen as inapplicable in this town. In other words: race exists elsewhere, not in Greensburg. In sharp contrast to coverage of the Lower Ninth after Katrina, Greensburg is represented by the popular press as "just a normal community," or "your average God-fearing town." It is their "normalcy," which makes the disaster all the more shocking, the coverage insists. Disasters like this do not happen in small town America But this depiction of an all-white community as "ordinary America" functions to further normalize whiteness. On the *Planet Green* blog, Greensburg, Kansas is described as "ordinary, everyday people of great character who choose to face adversity head on and create a better life for themselves."[110] The CBS Early Show held special episodes in Greensburg for a week, remarking numerous times that Greensburg residents are "ordinary people doing something extraordinary."[111]

The first episode of Discovery Channel's *Greensburg* reality TV show opens with a birds-eye view of lush green farmland. We then transition into shots of Americana: (white) parents pushing children in oversized swings, (white) people crossing the town's main street, and

(white) cheerleaders performing in a stadium packed with (white) town residents. A voiceover from the town administrator tells viewers that, "Greensburg, Kansas, is very typical of the average small town America, midwest America… focused around family. We go to church, we go to school, we know our neighbors. We root for the high school football team to win the state championship." Another interviewed resident tells watchers "it's a great place to have kids. You can let your kids walk down the street and not have to worry about 'em." Indeed, the images of friendly neighbors joined together at basketball games and town parades harkens back to a simpler time and embodies traditional American values. However, in all the footage from two seasons of the reality TV show, and all the media specials celebrating the rebirth of this rural town, one thing is clear: Greensburg is almost exclusively a white town. No one visibly of color ever speaks on behalf of this "average" American community in the Discovery channel cable show or in the news specials that aired on network television.

Overt racial markers are completely absent in descriptions of Greensburg, Kansas, whether it be news coverage, presidential rhetoric, or the words of residents themselves. However, as feminist geographers remind us, all places are racialized, if in a masked manner. By framing Greensburg as "typical," "average" America, these media portrayals further normalize whiteness. Additionally, media coverage of the Greensburg tornado frames town residents as agents of their own recovery – "ordinary Americans" who courageously *chose* to rebuild green. This narrative is far different than media coverage of recovery in the Lower Ninth Ward, where residents are portrayed as victims, objects instead of subjects, and dependent upon charity organizations. "Folks rolled up their sleeves and got to work," remarks Governor Sebelius. And because Greensburg residents made the proactive choice to rebuild green of their own volition, they are worthy of outside help.

These (Black and/or Poor) People are Stupid

Hemant Shah links narratives of race and rationality across history, arguing that Europeans' earliest notions of superiority over people of color was based upon the belief that whites alone possessed the capacity for logical thought.[112] Furthermore, it has been proven again and again in mass media scholarship that the race of the protagonist directly impacts how journalists frame the story.[113] Both Shah and Tierney have studied media framing of black residents of New Orleans in the days immediately following disaster, arguing that rumors (later proven false) of raping and widespread looting dominated coverage. Many news stories framed residents (over 85% of whom were black, and almost all of whom were poor or working class) as animal-like or savages who had retreated "into a primitive state" or chosen "the law of the jungle."[114] These rumors did not just spawn from the imagination of media professionals, however. Mayor Nagin himself told stories about babies being raped and New Orleans Police Chief Edwin Compass testified that thugs with guns were outgunning police in the convention center, both on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*.[115] Anna Hartnell argues that blackness is often synonymous with sensory pleasure and sin, reinforcing the discriminatory hierarchy "that equates blackness with the body – the "sins" of the flesh – and whiteness with the mind."[116] Transgressive, savage behavior is naturalized for black New Orleanians in this frame. Potentially more dangerous than these overly dramatic tales of savagery, however, are the more subtle assertions by journalists that black and poor New Orleans lack intelligence or prudence. As hooks laments, popular culture "repeatedly tells us that blacks are inferior to whites, more likely to commit crimes, come from broken homes, are all on welfare."[117]

Repeatedly in planning documents, books written about Katrina's legacy, newspaper articles, and blog posts, media sources assert that it is senseless to rebuild areas of New Orleans

that are most vulnerable to flood waters. John Beckman, of Wallace Roberts & Todd (WRT)

architectural firm has stated many times that the current state of affairs in New Orleans is

unintelligent. WRT was responsible for the original BNOB renewal plan, and the firm is a big

advocate of what they euphemistically call "managed contraction." In response to Pitt's Make It

Right Foundation rebuilding green homes in the L9W, Beckman responds, "people are trying to

go back and create what was there before, without having learned a lesson."[118] Referring directly

to the L9W, Beckman asks, "Why not rebuild on higher, cleaner, more central ground?"[119]

"There's no sense rebuilding in the areas that are lowest," said Pres Kabacoff, a prominent New

Orleans developer known for converting old warehouses and factories into hipster

condominiums.[120] Social aspects of vulnerability are slighted in this statement while the (black,

poor) citizens who want to return to their neighborhoods are framed as irrational, having "no

sense" or not having learned their lesson. Similarly, Stephen Flynn emphasizes that it is

unintelligent to rebuild without a comprehensive top-down plan or to rebuild in the old location:

> "There is no commitment by the federal government to fund rebuilding of the coastal wetlands and barrier islands. At the local level, there are no comprehensive guidelines to inform the rebuilding of neighborhoods. The zoning rules are only being tweaked at the margins, so residents of the areas that suffered the most severe flooding are not being discouraged from rebuilding on the same spots and in virtually the same way as before Katrina struck…the goal is 'to empower people to make decisions for themselves and their communities.' Unfortunately, this grassroots approach to recovery almost guarantees that there will be no serious effort to build a city that can survive the next big one."[121]

What goes unsaid here is that virtually all of the "residents that suffered the more severe

flooding" are black. Furthermore, these (black) residents are positioned as not intelligent enough

to be "empowered" or to make decisions for themselves. If they are given the opportunities,

these (black) residents will chose wrong. Flynn does have a point that low-lying neighborhoods

coupled with a lack of government planning to restore wetlands is a recipe for disaster. Seen

purely as an economic or geographical development problem, a neoliberal cost-benefit analysis, the solution seems simple: move people to higher ground. What I take exception to is the framing of this dilemma as clear, clean cut, and not raced or classed.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, in the conservative press, the implication that New Orleanians are senseless and lazy is made even more explicitly. On FOXNews, Bill O'Reilly insisted that the (black, poor) people of New Orleans needed to learn their lesson and start acting rationally:

> Connect the dots and wise up. Educate yourself, work hard and be honest. If you don't the odds are you will be desperately standing on a symbolic rooftop someday yourself.[122]

Here, black residents of the city need to "wise" up and start working hard like the rest of America, else they find themselves once again standing on a symbolic rooftop, vulnerable and desperate. Individual responsibility, hard work, and honesty are all one needs to succeed according to O'Reilly and others employing this neoliberal logic, and no acknowledgement of systemic oppression or social vulnerability is admissible here. O'Reilly and others essentially blame (black, poor) residents of New Orleans for their own suffering. In the *New York Times*, one Op-Ed columnist writes that "most of the ambitious and organized people abandoned inner-city areas of New Orleans long ago."[123] It is their own fault, then, that they lost their homes and family members. Media frames provided a comfortable answer to the uncomfortable questions about race raised by Katrina: the black poor of New Orleans were culpable for their own vulnerability and need.

It is interesting, then, that no parallel victim-blaming discourse emerged around the Greensburg tornado. As mentioned above, Greensburg is located squarely within tornado alley; they experience a few tornado threats each year, and although the 2007 tornado was the only one in the county's history to result in fatalities, many people have been injured and residents have

incurred costly structural damage over the years. While rural Kansas is certainly not as dangerous a place to be as the Gulf Coast, there was an accepted risk in living in the community. In fact, since the 2007 tornado, another large storm has threatened the town as well, but thankfully spared residents further damage.

While human interest pieces about the Lower Ninth Ward often frame residents as desperate figures, victims unable to return home and constantly "in limbo," coverage of Greensburg presents a different picture. Many Greensburg residents found themselves in FEMA-provided trailers for 18 months, but instead of framing these citizens as helpless or in limbo, human interest pieces focused on how residents actively and hopefully worked to instill the community with a feeling of "normalcy." For example, in the *Hutchinson Times,* three pages were devoted to the creation of a "Candy Cane Lane" holiday display by Greensburg residents to inspire holiday cheer.[124] Unlike New Orleans residents, who Bill O'Reilly and other pundits accuse of being lazy or accountable for their own victimhood, folks in Greensburg tend to be described as active heroes and heroines.

> The tornado killed nine people and injured dozens more when it tore through the area Friday Night. But the survivors said things could have been much worse, and that people started pulling together even in the storm's immediate aftermath.[125]

> An intrepid group of survivors hatched a plan to rebuild their home as the greenest city in America – the most environmentally sustainable and energy efficient in the nation.[126]

> [This is] a moment in American history where one town has decided to set the example for the green building movement.[127]

Instead of emphasizing looting or chaotic misbehavior (which did occur after the tornado on a very small scale), the narrative of Greensburg portrays its (white) citizens as "pulling together" immediately and working together to selflessly aid their neighbors and friends. They are "intrepid" and the townspeople have "decided," "hatched a plan," to set the example for the nation and build their homes in a sustainable manner. They are agents of their own destiny. Even

though recovery may be moving slowly in the rebuilding process, progress is most often

emphasized, rather than lack of progress, as in L9W. In the words of one interviewed Greenburg

resident, "Things going on around town are very encouraging…every time you see a new house,

a new basement being poured or a new building going up, that's been very encouraging."[128]

Representational spaces of Greensburg embody "Midwestern pluck" in the face of adversity,

employing a narrative of resilience I explore further in chapter six. I argue that it is no

coincidence that Greensburg has raised all the money they require for essential town structures

and nearly finished construction while the Lower Ninth Ward still lacks a public school or

grocery store. Media representation, especially "mediated racism," hooks insists, have material,

spatial, and social consequences.[129]

Strategic Optimism

It is important at this junction to note that discussions of environmental racism and spatial

justice are essential because, as critical theorists remind us, unmasking and naming oppression is

the first step to correcting it. In 1996, a class action suit was brought against the Metropolitan

Transit Authority (MTA) in the city of Los Angeles by grassroots EJ activists for discrimination

against the urban and transit-dependent poor who could not afford a car.[130] According to the

case's ruling, the MTA was required to give their highest budget priority to improving service

and guaranteeing access to mass transit by reducing overcrowding, introducing energy efficient

buses, limiting fare increases, and improving security. This is one of the few examples of

grassroots EJ movements effecting community planning and government appropriations. In the

words of Edward Soja, "In essence, the consent decree resulted in the transfer of billions of

dollars from a plan that disproportionately favored the wealthy to a plan that worked more to the

benefit of the poor."[131] This victory against environmental racism is even more significant when

one considers the conservative political climate under which is was passed and the racial tension and urban uprisings in Los Angeles just four years earlier. As was the case with Hurricane Katrina, the judicial proceedings in L.A. exposed the general public to the "significant racial, class, and geographical biases that are embedded in all forms of public planning."[132] This L.A. victory is an example of successful urban insurgency, a fight for racial and spatial justice in the face of extreme resistance both locally and nationally. And indeed, although residents are still suffering gross injustice, there are also a few victories to celebrate in the Lower Ninth Ward – victories that can be linked to the efforts of local citizens and environmental activists.

For example, despite the many plans and political support for hazing the Lower Ninth Ward, it did not happen. Although residents are struggling to return and facing discrimination in the insurance claims process and when applying for HUD grant money, the neighborhood still stands. Residents who have returned are so dedicated that they have organized weekly lawn mowings of all the vacant lots and unoccupied houses to prevent nature from taking the land back. Despite a void of local political leadership, residents banded together with existent social clubs and new associations. Multiple neighborhoods drew up their own redevelopment plan, raised external funds, and started making proposed projects reality. In the words of Mack, "We realized our power, our strength as a community. We are doing it for ourselves. And convincing others to help." Residents sought out reporters and journalists, invoking childhood memories of the Ward and insisting that is was much more than a blighted or poverty-stricken backwater. "We had to raise awareness," local activist Darren explains, "or else ya'll [outsiders/nonresidents] wouldn't help out." Indeed, Mayor Nagin changed his tune in the wake of massive anger about plans to demolish the L9W in its entirety, assuring residents in October of 2005 that there was "no ulterior plan to go in and mass demolish the Lower Ninth Ward."[133]

Interestingly, rebuilding investments may have helped bolster the local economy from the Great

Recession; New Orleans unemployment rate was 7% in May of 2010, compared to 9.7%

nationally. Instead of disaster recovery, The Greater New Orleans Community Data Center

(GNOCDC) insists residents and officials should focus on resilience and transformation. The

emphasis on environmental justice in the wording of the planning document is encouraging, to

say the least: "Better than before means reversing trends on a stagnant economy, generating

higher-wage jobs, equipping our workforce for jobs of the future, reducing sharp racial and

ethnic disparities, developing sustainably, and regaining faith in basic services such as police and

schools."[134]

"We tend to think of natural disasters as somehow even-handed, as somehow random,"

claims Martin Espada. "Yet it has always been thus: poor people are in danger. That is what it

means to be poor. It's dangerous to be poor. It's dangerous to be black. It's dangerous to be

Latino."[135] In this chapter I illustrate just how dangerous poverty and blackness can be in an

attempt to unmask the raced and classed assumptions embedded in public planning efforts after

the storm and spatial understandings of justice and injustice. I then expand my analysis to

compare official media constructions (or representational spaces) of Greensburg and the Lower

Ninth Ward, revealing that discourse is racialized just as space is.

Race is a social construction, and it is constituted, contested, and reconstituted through

daily interactions. In other words, race is not a matter of essential quality, but is instead

dependent on context and specific political and social relationships. As Tierney and Shah remind

us: the media do not simply *represent* race, they constantly create, transform, and reinforce racial

categories. These racializations are not innocuous; they directly influence public policy and

public opinion. According to Shah:

> The analysis of conservative news commentary on Katrina suggests… that the Bush administration did not ignore Black Katrina survivors because they are somehow inherently irrational. But the administration and their supporters may have accepted conservative media formulations of Black irrationality so that Katrina survivors could be ignored.[136]

I wish to conclude this chapter with a comparison of how the media and individual residents compared the cases of Greensburg and The Lower Ninth Ward or New Orleans. Most often, Katrina is evoked in conjunction with Greensburg when discussing the Bush administration's poor handling of Katrina and how performance in Kansas matches up. Discussing Katrina in the *New York Times*, Kiowa County Commissioner Earl Liggett remarks, "I think FEMA was left with some egg on its face there, and they're going to make sure it doesn't happen here, and it hasn't. It's been an unbelievable response."[137] The egg on FEMA's face is not directly related to race, class, or social vulnerability however, and this is a representative treatment of the subject. Most often, Bush is praised in the media for his quick action and multiple trips to Kansas to act as "comforter-in-Chief," attributed to his trying to gain lost ground after the "embarrassment" or "shame" of Katrina. However, in this comparative coverage, race is not mentioned, indicating that in all-white Greensburg, race is not as issue. As Stage reminds us, white privilege is almost always taken for granted.[138] In an article published by *FOXNews*, Greensburg Mayor Bob Dixon argues, "People were just looking for each other…'cause it mattered not your socio-economic status in Greensburg, you lost everything. Everybody was on the same page."[139]

During my fieldwork in Greensburg, I asked residents how they thought disaster mitigation efforts in Greensburg compared with Katrina. Here are some of their responses:

> "Well, um, I think we have an easier situation here, um, in terms of being all middle class and not having the kinds of you know of social problems here in Greensburg."

> R: "Oh, we were afraid of FEMA after hearing about New Orleans and all that. But they [government officials] were great."
> K: "Why do you think there was such a difference?"

R: "Well it's bigger, for one thing. And [pause] and we have such a great community here. They were dealing with all sorts of issues there. The riots."

"Well, I didn't have any problems. I mean, my insurance guy was wonderful, and FEMA was great. I almost think we benefited from Katrina, 'cuz it was such a scandal. But everyone was great."

Here, we can really see that rhetorical strategies of normalized whiteness and color – and power – evasive race discourse in the discussion of Katrina and Greensburg are really two sides of the same coin. Embedded in these answers is a reticence to talk frankly about race, coupled with racial privilege presented through strategies of normalized whiteness. This is a perfect example of Frankenberg's "race-evasive discourse," when rhetors employ euphemisms to assert racist claims while maintaining political correctness.[140]

Race-evasive discourse and normalized whiteness are so harmful and so powerful because of their invisibility, their seeming inevitability. The rhetorical moves of prejudice in public discourses of disaster must be unmasked because they deny the existence of racism while presenting discrimination in a new form. In the words of bell hooks, "overt racist discrimination is not as fashionable as it once was and that is why everyone can pretend racism does not exist."[141] Mass media representations, representational spaces, of Katrina at best cast black or poor people as victims, and at worst elide the issue of race altogether. In this chapter I argue this problematic racial narrative is made even more visible when compared to media frames employed for Greensburg residents. Strategies of normalized whiteness reinforce discriminatory discourses in a mutually constitutive environment of racial intolerance and denial. By comparing media narratives of these two communities touched by tragedy, the harmful post-racial mythos can be deconstructed. By adopting a spatial justice framework, one which highlights the overlapping and intersectional elements of social vulnerability – race, class gender – to essentially put the *human* back in human geography, scholars, activists, and policy-makers can

engage the soci-spatial dialectic in new and productive ways, work to lessen environmental

injustice, and combat the appropriation of sustainability discourses for discriminatory ends.

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Chapter 5

Rhetorics of Resilience:

Natural Disaster, National Security, and National Identity

Resilience – (noun): A community or region's capability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from significant multi-hazard threats with minimum damage to public safety and health, the economy, and national security.[1]

Something about the tales of the Greensburg tornado and Hurricane Katrina continues to fascinate and occupy prominent positions in our national imaginary years after the initial tragedies took place. The accounts of vulnerability and resilience, tragedy and triumph, appeal both to our morbid and our most hopeful sentiments. "Katrina: Five Years Later" dominated the news in August of 2010, and new documentaries and television specials about Greensburg and New Orleans emerge each year, indicating that these two disasters are still very much a part of collective memory and the national imaginary. In President Obama's first address to Congress on February 24, 2009, Mayor Bob Dixon of Greensburg occupied a position of honor in the First Lady's balcony of the house chamber. During Obama's speech, which promoted common values such as hope, change, and resilience, Obama refers to Greensburg as a source of inspiration, a "global example" of how one can turn a tragedy into an opportunity. "I have also learned that hope is found in unlikely places," Obama insists, "that inspiration often comes not from those with the most power or celebrity, but from the dreams and aspirations of Americans who are anything but ordinary."[2] As one of three vignettes of (extra)ordinary Americans included in the speech, Obama highlights the resolve and drive of Greensburg as a community. He testifies:

> I think about Greensburg, Kansas, a town that was completely destroyed by a tornado, but is being rebuilt by its residents as a global example of how clean energy can power an entire community – how it can bring jobs and businesses to a place where piles of bricks and rubble once lay. "The tragedy was terrible," said one of the men who helped them rebuild. "But the folks here know that it also provided an incredible opportunity."[3]

This is a parable for the rest of us, Obama implies, a modern morality tale of perseverance and resolve: [4]

> These stories tell us something about the spirit of the people who sent us here. They tell us that even in the most trying times, amid the most difficult circumstances, there is a generosity, a resilience, a decency, and a determination that perseveres; a willingness to take responsibility for our future and for posterity. Their resolve must be our inspiration. Their concerns must be our cause. And we must show them and all our people that we are equal to the task before us. I know that we haven't agreed on every issue thus far, and there are surely times in the future when we will part ways. But I also know that every American who is sitting here tonight loves this country and wants it to succeed. That must be the starting point for every debate we have in the coming months, and where we return after those debates are done. That is the foundation on which the American people expect us to build common ground. [5]

Expectations for citizens are laid bare in this discursive construction of what it means to be a resilient American: one must be principled, generous, decent, determined, patriotic, and equal to even the most difficult task. One must use this shared resilience as a foundation for finding common ground with one's fellow citizen.

A few months earlier, President George W. Bush delivered a commencement address at Greensburg High School, the only high school address given during his tenure as president. Though there is more mention of terrorism in Bush's speech, the essential elements of the two addresses remain the same. Bush insists that America must join together to celebrate "the resurgence of a town that stood tall when its buildings and homes were laid low," and "the resilience of 18 seniors who grow closer together when the world around them blew apart." President Bush explicitly states the lessons that are to be learned from Greensburg's story, namely that "America's communities are stronger than any storm," and that "Americans will always rebuild stronger and better than before." He then reasons that, "out of the devastation of the storm comes an opportunity to rebuild with a free hand and a clean slate." Bush compares Greensburg with other tragedies and hardships the nation has faced and born with resilience and

courage:

> Over the past seven years, I've seen Americans in communities across our country overcome some tough hands. I've seen the resolve of the American spirit in the wake of the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the flood waters of Hurricane Katrina, eight hurricanes in Florida, tornadoes in states like Missouri, Tennessee, and Alabama, wildfires of southern California and in Oregon. I saw the same resolve and the same determination in the people of Greensburg, Kansas.

Again, the message is clear: Americans overcome. They have resolve, determination, and will always emerge from a challenge stronger than before. Whether the president is evoking the past as Bush does, or expressing a vision for the future as Obama does, in both epideictic speeches, resilience plays an integral role.

These two epideictic moments reveal the power of resilience as a unifying theme and symbol of American resolve. Although I have chosen here to highlight presidential speeches given about Greensburg, the rhetorical moves used by both Bush and Obama to discuss the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina are virtually identical, which will become clear throughout the rest of this chapter. For example, in his speech delivered on the fifth anniversary of Katrina, Obama insists that, "New Orleans is becoming a model of innovation for the nation. This is yet another sign that you're not just rebuilding – you're rebuilding stronger than before."[6] It is the job of the rhetorical critic to investigate what functions these narratives of resilience might perform, both for citizens and for the public officials and media figures who employ them.

As I explored in chapter one, memory scholarship often works to distinguish between different typologies of memory. For my present purposes, however, categorizing memory is less important than recognizing memory's multiple forms, functions, processes, practices, and outcomes. Charles Morris defines public memory as " a purposeful engagement of the past, forged symbolically in public, profoundly constitutive of identity, community, and moral vision, inherently consequential in its ideological implications, and very often the fodder of political

conflagration."[7] One of the clearest and more influential iterations of collective or public memory, I argue, is the attempt by public officials to evoke a national identity through the use of parabolic or morality tales of the nation's past. Biesecker captures this phenomena well in her discussion of how Tom Brokaw, Bill Clinton, and other media and political figures used World War II narrative to illustrate that true Americans sacrifice for their fellow countrymen, never surrender, and should stand together in unity instead of allowing themselves to be divided by distance.[8] In a time of overwhelming partisan squabbling, she argues, tales of the heroism of World War II chastised Americans for not filling the shoes of "The Greatest Generation" and focusing on their own needs instead of the needs of their nation. Nearly three decades later, partisan politics and the division between red states and blue states defines our nation to an even greater extent. Coupled with an overwhelming and pervasive sense of uncertainty, the single characteristic that Marlia Banning argues best defines the current era, Americans are largely unsure, divided, and insecure about the future.[9] Using the tales of Katrina and Greensburg, however, public officials and media figures can shape a version of collective memory, constituting national identity in the face of adversity and the proliferating catastrophes (economic collapse, unprecedented tsunamis, floods, and tornados, school shootings) that define the second decade of the 21st century.

In this chapter, I focus on the symbolic strategies used in official rhetorics to discursively produce resilience, and how these rhetorics apply lessons from New Orleans and Greensburg for the purpose of nation-building. My concentration is the larger narrative scripts of disaster and recovery that help to constitute and reiterate national identity. At first it seems obvious that public figures and media professionals would emphasize resilience and quick recovery following natural disaster or terrorist attack. After catastrophe, people need reassurance, a frame to make

sense of events, and encouragement to move forward – all rhetorical duties of the President in his role as "comforter-in-chief."[10] However, I argue that in the official rhetoric (both presidential speeches and coverage in the popular press) of Hurricane Katrina and the Greensburg Tornado, there is a masked complexity to this master topoi of resilience, which has become an ideograph that dictates American response to terror, disaster, economic downturn, and much more.[11] My first research question addressed the symbolic strategies used to justify sustainability while my second research question asks how memory is evoked and utilized in identity formation. This chapter addresses both these concerns and I analyze resilience as it plays out in the national imaginary and collective memory.

I argue that the resilience of the American people is a dominant topoi in Katrina and Greensburg discourses because it functions to (1) unite the nation in an "imagined community" by evoking shared values and (2) discipline those who wish to critique institutional response to disaster or offer conflicting narratives.[12] First I examine the three topoi of resilience that shape the concept as an ideograph: Resilience as response to opportunity, resilience as strength, and resilience as responsibility to one's fellow citizens. I then explore the potential for Greensburg and Katrina mythos to play an active role in reframing Bush-era national security discourses in productive ways. First, rhetors position climate change as a "threat multiplier," both for domestic concerns and for foreign relations. Second, rhetors argue that sustainability in our infrastructure and energy consumption will lessen our dependence on foreign oil and therefore increase resilience. Finally, the argument for national resilience is extended to individual resilience, making a case for sustainable living as a form of civil defense on the home front. I argue that, while the impetus for the shift from preparedness to resilience is largely neoliberal capitalist logic, climate change scholars and activists may use the neoliberal apparatus to further the

environmental agenda.[13] First, however, I must make a case for why disaster is perpetually a part of our national imaginary and what effect these narratives of resilience can have.

Vulnerability and Resilience in the National Imaginary

Dr. Stephen Flynn, lead policy advisor on homeland security for President Obama's transition team and president of the Center for National Policy, is extremely concerned about U.S. Security. Following 9/11, he wrote the bestselling *America the Vulnerable*, where Flynn argues that the United States is dangerously unprepared to prevent and respond to any terrorist attack, that the occupation of Iraq elevates this risk, and that the nation must act with more vigor to mitigate terror risks on American soil.[14] Flynn posits a number of frightful scenarios where a few men with very little planning can kill thousands, using our carelessness against us, an argument that Stephen Graham argues is dangerous for global understandings of "homeland security."[15] Graham argues that our post- 9/11 age is categorized by a "startling militarization of civil society," meaning that political figures, citizens, and commenters such as Flynn all respond to changing global security threats by agonizing over the securing and surveilling of "the quotidian spaces and circulations of everyday life."[16] In this paradigm shift, Graham insists, the city's public and private spaces, even the material infrastructure, acts as both threat and potential target. The result is an alarming boomerang effect wherein aggressive military tactics, surveillance equipment, and weaponry intended for warfare are utilized domestically.[17] Neil Smith and Setha Low similarly warn that the Patriot Act and similar legislation has resulted in an unprecedented circumscription of use of public space.[18] "From city parks to public streets, cable and network news shows to Internet blogs sites, the clampdown on public space, in the name of enforcing public safety and homeland security, has been dramatic."[19]

A few years later, in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, Flynn's security focus shifted dramatically. He published *The Edge of Disaster: Rebuilding a Resilient Nation*, where Flynn argues that in addition to the terrorist threats he outlined previously, natural disaster and pandemic disease mean that, "increasingly, Americans are living on the edge of disaster. Like reckless teenagers, we have been embracing risks while shrugging off the likely consequences."[20] Despite the failures of Katrina, he argues, managing risks associated with natural and manmade disaster is not being treated as a national priority. "There are things we can and must be doing, right now," Flynn argues, "to make America a more resilient society."[21] In other words: resiliency from within is just as important as combating dangers from without. Flynn argues that embracing "national resiliency" instead of "homeland security" as the organizing principle for disaster mitigation is important for three reasons. First, it taps into civil society's strength. Second, improving national infrastructure (such as the levees in New Orleans) will stimulate the economy. Finally, it lessens the terrorist threat because "a society that can match [terrorist] strength to deliver a punch with the means to take one makes an unattractive target."[22]

I highlight Flynn's work for several reasons. First, the fact that his books are national bestsellers indicate that terrorist attacks and natural disasters sell well; security, risk, and terror are currently topics of fascination, transgressive pleasure, perhaps even addiction for the American people. Indeed, we live in a disaster zeitgeist. In the decade following the September 11th terrorist attacks, mass communication scholars has recorded a proliferation of disaster films, especially films grappling with issues of civil rights versus national security, preventative war, and zenophobia.[23] Disasters both overseas and here in the United States dominate the news, and seem to be replaced with new tragedies weekly. Second, this emphasis on resilience, whether

credible to Flynn or not, has dominated national rhetoric in recent years even if, as Flynn warns, the actual risks remain unmitigated.

The two emphases of his books – vulnerability and resilience – represent a dialectic tension that dominates what it means to be an American citizen in a post-9/11 (and post-Katrina) world. Flynn's critique of the Bush administration's allocation of resources is not singular. After Hurricane Katrina, Mayor Nagin and Governor Blanco spoke out loudly and often about the gulf coast's increased vulnerability due to lack of military personal available stateside after the storm. Governor Sebelius in Kansas similarly expressed displeasure with President Bush for sending supplies and guardsmen to Iraq, leaving limited resources and personal for rescue operations in Greensburg. Finally, and most importantly, Flynn's three pillars of resilience – strong civil society, strong infrastructure, and strong potential for retaliation – mirror the resilience rhetoric employed by Obama, Bush, and DHS Secretary Napolitano when evoking Greensburg and New Orleans as symbols and models of national resilience. While many scholars lament the shift to "militaristic urbanism" or "martial law" in the wake of Katrina, in this chapter I map a more recent, and perhaps more productive, shift from top-down security initiatives to bottom-up policies intending to increase individual resilience.[24]

The United States is defined by what Kevin Rozario calls a "culture of calamity." Rozario argues that, since its birth as a nation, America has been caught in a never-ending cycle of "destruction and reconstruction, ruin and renewal."[25] In fact, the overarching progress narrative that so permeates our collective memory and acts as rationale for much of our political and corporate action would not be possible without disaster, he insists. Furthermore, disastrous events "seem to simplify an otherwise intolerably complicated world, seemingly revealing dualisms of good and evil or right and wrong that are so hard to identify in the ordinary run of

events."[26] One of the greatest ironies of our time, Rozario claims, is that we are at once

fascinated and entertained by disaster, while also fearful enough of it that we are willing to

sacrifice civil liberties in return for governmental protection from disaster. This paradox is

illustrated in the fixation of public discourse on perpetual disasters, coupled with the insistence

by media officials, public officials, and popular authors such as Flynn that the military is the only

institution capable of responding to these calamities. Calamity is a part of the capitalist

development system, Rozario argues. Massive destruction allows modernization, as major

disasters provide opportunities for urban and political renewal. Bean, Keränen, and Durfy take

this notion a step further, arguing that "resilience and vulnerability are dialectically linked—that

a people can be constituted as resilient precisely because they can also be coded as vulnerable."[27]

Indeed, in media coverage and presidential rhetoric following both Hurricane Katrina and

the Greensburg tornado, the dichotomy between vulnerability and resilience, ruin and renewal,

symbolic death and rebirth, appears repeatedly, serving to instruct listeners about American

values, and what it means to be a "good" citizen. Benedict Anderson argues that once the size of

a community makes it impossible for all members to be acquainted, that community must be

"imagined."[28] Anderson traces the rise of the nation-state, and connects this history to

nationalistic rhetoric, arguing that the use of communal rhetoric establishes national identity and

instructs citizens in how to behave as members of the national collective. It is this memory

narrative of imagined community, Anderson argues, that makes people willing to fight and die

for king and country or relinquish their rights in the name of national security. "Regardless of the

actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a

deep, horizontal comradeship."[29] Put another way, the narrative construction of national identity

is referred to as "scripts" by John L. Jackson. Jackson writes: "We have scripts for American

patriotism that disqualify anyone who, say, wears a *burka*. We write scripts for masculinity that mean not having sex with other men, scripts for blackness that mandate walking with a pimp strut, for femininity… and on and on – from the seemingly mundane to the extraordinary."[30]

Many communication scholars have explored links between official rhetoric and the scripting or constitution of national identity. For example, Biesecker notes that, when it comes to national identity and notions of "good" citizenship, viewers very much take their cues from media narratives, which shift over time.[31] Historic events, including disaster, are framed in popular press, prime-time news and radio coverage, and newspaper headlines so as to form a "moving moral frame by which we might collectively make sense of them."[32] It is our duty as rhetorical critics, she argues, to investigate these "multifaceted and multiplying" contemporary rhetorics, which attempt to renovate and reinvent the narrative of national belonging. As mentioned in the introduction, much of Carole Blair's work explores how commemorative national monuments instruct citizens about what it means to be American.[33] In Michael Schudson's comprehensive history of citizenship and civic engagement in America, he argues that our current era is one where the reach of government has been extended into everyday life, but also where the rights-centered citizen is individualistic.

Griffin-Padgett and Allison map the different rhetorical approaches to crisis management, including apologia, blame-shifting, and image-saving tactics.[34] Unsatisfied, however, they ask, "What happens, on the other hand, when the crisis in question is not a result of an organization's unethical behavior or a grave company mistake?"[35] Griffin-Padgett and Allison argue that in these more complex cases, strategic rhetoric is combined with more humanistic communication, to focus on "the substantive issues of repair, recovery, rebuilding, and helping victims to make sense of what has occurred and to envision a new reality."[36] These discourses make up a new

rhetorical genre, they argue, one which they term "restorative rhetoric." Griffin-Padgett and

Allison explain:

> While restorative rhetoric functions as a form of crisis response, it is not concerned with denying that the crisis exists, saving face in the public eye, or making excuses to justify specific actions. Instead, a primary concern of restorative rhetoric is to help victims and others affected cope with the physical and emotional destruction of the crisis.[37]

While I applaud the authors' attempt to make sense of public discourse following national crises,

I argue that their model is, at best, incomplete and a bit naive. Griffin-Padgett and Allison use

Rudy Giuliani's rhetoric post-9/11 and Ray Nagin's rhetoric post-Katrina as their two cases. The

authors rightly argue that these rhetorics have the purpose of (1) restoring faith, (2) facilitating

healing for victims, (3) creating a sense of security, and (4) establishing a vision for the future,

but Griffin-Padgett and Allison falter in their failure to recognize that this is not *all* these

mayor's rhetorics try to accomplish, nor do these speeches function merely for the good of the

citizenry. While the authors do briefly mention that restorative rhetoric has implications for

"wider audiences," this is not the focus of their study of Giuliana and Nagin. Although the above

excerpts derive from speeches delivered to specific geographic communities, the message is not

reserved for residents of the gulf coast or tornado alley. I argue that in these official memory

rhetorics of resilience, Greensburg and New Orleans act as synecdoche for the United States as a

whole. Mayors Giuliani and Nagin similarly prepared speeches for large national audiences, not

just their constituents. Resilient discourses instruct all audiences, not just those directly affected

by the storms. These speeches invoke past events (in this case, the very near past) to build a

national identity and influence behavior in the presence and future. Furthermore, Griffin-Padgett

and Allison erroneously assume that public figures feel no need to place or deflect blame, justify

their actions, or save face in the wake of natural disasters. Critical media discourses about

President Bush's response to Katrina or President Obama's inaction in the wake of the Gulf Oil

Spill prove otherwise, and I maintain that this resiliency rhetoric serves to guide and instruct Americans in the behavior of the good citizen, thereby curbing impulses to criticize or oppose government response to disaster.

Bigger, Better, Stronger Than Before – Constituting The Resilient American

Michael Calvin McGee defines an ideograph as the use of particular words or phrases in political language to constitute and reinforce a particular ideological position.[38] Part of an ideograph's power, McGee asserts, is that they are easily mistaken for technical terminology instead of ideologically-charged words. Indeed, as explored later in this chapter, resiliency is often represented as a technical and scientific pillar of national security plans. Ideographs are often invoked in public discourse, but are not easily defined, though ironically their lack of specific referent is used to unite citizens under a common banner. Resilience is an ideograph that is defined by three main topoi: seeing opportunity in tragedy, coming back stronger than ever before, and adopting responsibility for our fellow citizens.

Resilience as the Ability to See Opportunity in Disaster

As Rozario reminds us, with disaster comes opportunity – the chance to build something (a school system, a city, a transportation system) from scratch. Marshall Berman similarly notes, "to be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world -- and at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are."[39] This is a contemporary challenge to be embraced, we are told, with good old-fashioned American can-do attitude and determination. In President Obama's first speech to the joint session of Congress highlighted above, he notes that after the Greensburg tornado, "'the tragedy was terrible… but the folks here know it also provided an incredible opportunity." Resilient citizens understand that we cannot

linger too long in our sorrow, but must embrace the opportunity that tragedy affords to strike while the iron is hot. For example, Kansas Governor Sebelius optimistically remarks to *The New York Times* that, "We have an opportunity to rebuild a real American town."[40] Four days later, she explains the *USA Today* that the storm provided "an opportunity to rebuild a rural community on the cutting edge."[41] Town residents interviewed by the media even go so far as to label the tornado a "blessing." For example, Greensburg mayor John Janson regularly refers to the tornado as "one of the biggest blessings to hit our town."[42] Others are more tempered in their claims. "Although people definitely won't consider it a blessing when the tornado hit, there are many blessings that will come out of it," reasons Jarrett Schaef, class president of 2008 Greensburg High School senior class, quoted in *The Washington Post.*[43]

In the initial weeks after Hurricane Katrina, use of the opportunity topos was very limited. Considering that more than 1500 New Orleanians lost their lives (compared to thirteen deaths in Greensburg), it perhaps seemed callous and unfeeling to imply that the storm was a blessing or an occasion for greatness.[44] As time passed, however, and discussions turned from rescue missions and regaining order to recovery and rebuilding, the summoning of the opportunity topos became more widespread. In President George W. Bush's commencement address at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College in 2006, for example, he urges that we must embrace a "spirit that sees hope in adversity, and possibility in pain." President Obama references "opportunity" a total of 23 times in his speech delivered on the fifth anniversary of Katrina, which emphasized not just opportunity for the Gulf Coast but for American as a whole, through rebuilding our nation's infrastructure which would in turn strengthen the economy and create new jobs. Current New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu issued a lofty "City Vision" statement in August of 2010, claiming that "with resilience, we transform challenges into

instruments of progress with the belief and assurance that change is possible."[45] But in the discursive construction of resiliency, the opportunity is not to build back what existed before, but to make it even better.

Resilience as Emerging Better, Stronger, Bigger

> *In the life of this nation, we have often been reminded that nature is an awesome force, and that all life is fragile. We're the heirs of men and women who lived through those first terrible winters at Jamestown and Plymouth, who rebuilt Chicago after a great fire, and San Francisco after a great earthquake, who reclaimed the prairie from the Dust Bowl of the 1930s. Every time, the people of this land have come back from fire, flood, and storm to build anew -- and to build better than what we had before. Americans have never left our destiny to the whims of nature -- and we will not start now.[46]*

Most often, the opportunity or possibility afforded by disaster resilience is expressed as a chance for rebirth, and to be "reborn" or "renewed" with the same *spirit* as before the tragedy, but with a new *strength*. One of the most enduring elements of the American mythos is strength in the face of adversity, our ability as a nation to not just survive destruction or difficulty, but to thrive and emerge from adversity stronger than we were before, and stronger than our enemies.[47] Americans must emerge from a tragedy better equipped for the future, and in the case of many parts of New Orleans and the entirety of Greensburg, they must also emerge "greener." In the following text excerpts, I have purposely not distinguished between speeches about Katrina and speeches about the Greensburg tornado, nor have I distinguished between speeches given by President Bush and President Obama to emphasis the similar rhetorical strategies employed by each, though details can be found in notes:

> "We will rebuild, we will recover, and the United States of America will emerge stronger than before."[48]

> "Across the Gulf Coast…we are seeing that same spirit – a core strength that survives all hurt, a faith in God no storm can take away, and a powerful American determination to clear the ruins and build better than before."[49]

> "When communities are rebuilt, they must be even better an stronger than before."[50]

"That is our vision for the future, in this city and beyond: We'll not just rebuild, we'll build higher and better."[51]

"Over these past nine months you have shown a resilience more powerful than any storm."[52]

"This nation has known hard times before and we will surely know them again. What sees us through – what has always seen us through – is our strength, our resilience, and our unyielding faith that something better awaits us if we summon the courage to reach for it."[53]

"By your determination to reach this day, you have sent a message to our nation and the world: Mississippi is coming back, and it's going to be better than ever before."[54]

"When the class of 2008 walks across the stage today you will send a powerful message to our nation: Greensburg, Kansas is back – and its best days are ahead."[55]

"The school system has not only survived, but they're going to be stronger and better than they were before."[56]

"Step one of rebuilding is to assure people, if another hurricane comes there will be a better, more effective response…in many places, the system is now better than it was before Katrina. We're working to make the levees stronger than ever by 2010, and we will study what we need to do to give New Orleans even greater protection."[57]

"And when the hurricanes hit, in the past, you cleaned up, you salvaged what you could, and you rebuilt. Every time, New Orleans came back – louder, brasher, and better."[58]

"We're resilient in New Orleans. Obviously, there's still a lot of suffering. But we're survivors. There's a real heart to this city that you don't get anywhere else."[59]

This is a very specific and strategic rendering of collective memory; through these discursive constructions of American resilience, citizens are reminded that they are never powerless, even in the wake of environmental disaster. They are strong, and they should prevail, since rhetorics of resilience evoke an ability to rebound from disaster, not avoid it. Resilience can be conceived of in two ways: as a character trait, a pluckiness and determination in the face of tribulation, or as a material commodity, the possession of a stable and strong infrastructure. Both aspects of resilience, symbolic and material, are evoked in the above discourses. Americans, we are told,

bounce back in spirit, but also in terms of our cities, highways, and ports. However, citizens are not expected to bounce back alone, and resiliency rhetoric insists that it is our civic duty as Americans to aid one another in the recovery process.

Resilience as Responsibility to Fellow Americans

During his speech commemorating the fifth anniversary of Katrina, President Obama offers New Orleans' resilience as a parable for the rest of the nation, remarking that "this city has become a symbol of resilience and of community and of the fundamental responsibility we have to one another."[60] President George W. Bush similarly asserts that, "we have no greater responsibility, no greater charge, than to stop our enemies and to protect our fellow citizens."[61] In the same address discussed in the opening of this chapter where Obama lauds Greensburg as a model for America, he insists "We are a nation that has seen promise amid peril, and claimed opportunity from ordeal" and that generous Americans possess "a willingness to take responsibility."[62] In the radio address immediately following Katrina's landfall, President Bush insists, "the tasks before us are enormous, but so is the heart of America. In America, we do not abandon our fellow citizens in their hour of need. And the federal government will do its part."[63] "New Orleans has been resilient and is demonstrating the power of citizen activism," writes one *Times-Picayune* columnist.[64]

As explored in chapter three, however, the emphasis on "citizens in their hour of need" and the use of unifying resilient rhetoric in discussion of Katrina was, again, not common in the first few days after the storm. Instead, initial presidential rhetoric and media coverage emphasized urban unrest, the need for military action, and city-wide "shoot to kill" orders.[65] Graham argues that neoliberal, conservative, capitalist political culture spurs distrust of urban city centers, demonizing them as "sites of decay, ghettoisation, promiscuity, moral pollution and

unerring welfare dependency."[66] It was only when the "savagery" of the urban population was quelled that we were reminded of New Orleanians' status as part of the fold, as fellow Americans. And so it becomes clear that resilience rhetorics are not all inclusive, but instead discipline citizens and offer instruction in proper civic expression. Apart from functioning merely as comforting gesture to residents of the effected communities, these resilient rhetorics function as *lessons* for the nation at large. Communities "must" be even better and stronger than they were before, reminds Bush. [67] Unequivocally, we are told that we "do not" abandon our neighbors in times of trouble. Lessons for the citizenry, however, is not the only application of the resilience topos.

National Resilience as a Pillar of National Security

Previously, I discussed the use of resilience rhetoric in the official and citizen framing of Greensburg and Katrina. However, it is important to note that the resilience ideograph is employed in official and unofficial discussions of many topics on the national arena.[68] President Obama, for example, argues that Americans must be resilient during our recovery from economic downturn and in our endurance of outsourcing of American jobs.[69] Bean, Keranen, and Durfy argue in that in the wake of the 2005 London bombings, political figures and media talking heads emphasized British stoicism and resilience, linking this bravery and toughness to assumed national identity.[70] In my research, the most striking parallel can be found between official rhetorics of resilience following natural disasters such as Katrina and Greensburg, and those discourses of resilience used to frame terrorist attacks on the United States, such as September 11th or Oklahoma City. For example, at the dedication of the Pentagon Memorial in Arlington, VA, then-president Bush remarks that, "for all our citizens, this memorial will be a reminder of the resilience of the American spirit." Mayor Rudy Giuliani, declares on October 1st

of 2001 that ''this massive attack was intended to break our spirit. It has not done that. It has made us stronger, more determined and more resolved.'' He ends by asserting, ''New Yorkers are strong and resilient. We are unified. And we will not yield to terror. We do not let fear make our decisions for us.'' Obviously there are a few differences in the message; terrorists are outside aggressors, and are vilified as such. However, the dictated response of the American people to both Katrina and 9/11 are coded as the same mandate: help one another, become more resilient, prepared, and vigilant than ever before, and emerge as stronger individuals and communities.

Bean, Keränen, and Durfy note that emphasis on resilience in national security discourses is a fairly recent development, and signifies a significant departure from Cold War-era policy, which emphasized preparedness instead.[71] On November 25st, 2002, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was founded, representing the largest government reorganization effort of fifty years.[72] However, the fledgling department was less concerned with resilience and more concerned with "eliminating terror" through military action on foreign soil and increased surveillance stateside. Following Katrina, the government was forced to face its overwhelming failure. DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff remarked in a 2006 speech that:

> [Katrina] forced us to focus on the fact that this country had not adequately planned for a true catastrophe, whether it be a natural catastrophe, or a manmade catastrophe, that the kind of rigorous planning at all levels and the building of capabilities that were necessary in the admittedly rare catastrophic instance was not there. And therefore, although there was tremendous work done by, for example, the Coast Guard in conducting 33,000 rescues, it was a vivid demonstration of the fact that improvisation is no substitute for preparation.[73]

It was not until recently, however, that current DHS Secretary Janet Napolitano made *resilience* the primary mandate of national security rather than *preparedness*. This is not merely an exercise in semantics, but instead illustrates a symbolic broadening of security as a longitudinal process

spanning from preemptive strike and individual preparation to recovery time and interagency collaboration.

Many communication and media scholars have argued that the presidential rhetoric and media framing of Hurricane Katrina functioned to create a fear of crisis in citizens while insisting that only the military had the ability to mitigate disaster. For example, in an interdisciplinary study, Tierney, Bevc, and Kuligowski prove that, despite copious evidence that citizens respond calmly and proactively to disasters, mythical notions that disaster is synonymous with looting, social chaos, and deviant behavior persist and thrive.[74] The authors build off decades of media theory and media effects research to show that mass media are key players in perpetuating these harmful myths about disaster behavior.[75] Tierney, Bevc, and Kuligowski analyze media coverage of Hurricane Katrina and disaster victims, arguing that the incidence and severity of looting and lawlessness was greatly exaggerated in a way that emphasized the need for strict control and the importance of military involvement in disaster management. Despite commonplace attitudes that these disaster myths are not harmful, the authors argue that metaphors matter – that the ways in which Katrina was framed by media outlets have very real consequences for public policy and government response surrounding disasters. For example, if officials are concerned about public panic, this may lead them to avoid alerting citizens or giving timely warnings. Similarly, inflated concern with the possibility for looting may cause community members to stay behind and guard their possessions instead of evacuating to safety. Bean, Keränen, and Durfy similarly argue that the ideographs used in public discourse have very real policy consequences, molding relationships between foreign allies and enemies alike.

Tierney, Bevc, and Kugligowski found that media coverage in the first day after the storm emphasized destruction and devastation. By the second day, emphasis shifted to looting and chaos. This frame led to media likening New Orleans to a "war zone," a metaphor which permeated the discourse of city officials soon after. For example, Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco changed her top priority to quelling looting from search and rescue three days after the storm. "Officials increasingly responded to the debacle in New Orleans – a debacle that was in large measure of their own making – as if the United States were facing an armed urban insurgency rather than a catastrophic disaster."[76] In one CNN News story, Governor Blanco is quoted saying the following:

> She said Thursday night that 300 soldiers from the Arkansas National Guard had arrived – "fresh back from Iraq."
>
> "These are some of the 40,000 extra troops that I have demanded," Blanco said. "They have M-16s, and they're locked and loaded . . . I have one message for these hoodlums: These troops know how to shoot and kill, and they are more than willing to do so if necessary, and I expect they will."[77]

News coverage emphasized the conditions of "urban warfare" present in New Orleans, and President Bush even offered to nationalize the National Guard because of military emergency in Louisiana.

Later, however, many of the fears and reports about the state of lawlessness in New Orleans were proven to be myths and exaggerations, dissolving faith in risk communication strategies on the ground. Furthermore, the DHS's first response to disaster was far from perfect. Many of the criticisms of DHS and FEMA response had to do with the U.S. militarism. For example, Governor Blanco, publicly complained that there were not enough guardsmen or equipment to respond to Katrina because they were all overseas fighting the War on Terror. In the words of one reporter:

There were no preparations for dealing with an event such as Hurricane Katrina because the entire purpose of the "war on terrorism" has not been to respond to a disaster, natural or otherwise. Rather it has been used as a pretext to carry out a massive expansion of US militarism and an unprecedented attack on democratic rights in the United States.[78]

James Hay argues that after their failures in the Gulf Coast, DHS rhetoric reflected a "changing culture of citizenship," one where citizens must take the initiative for their own safety. Since institutions tasked with preventing and responding to disasters were ineffective, citizens must be responsible for their own security. While the initial goal of the DHS was to remake the government as "a titanic structure against terror," the amended goal post-Katrina becomes resilience.[79] This shift from a "comprehensive national strategy to safeguard the country against terrorism" to "preparing your family" can be seen in the official rhetorics of the DHS website, Obama's presidential rhetoric, and the speeches of Secretary Napolitano. While endorsing his new FEMA administrator, for example, President Obama remarks that "he is already moving to make sure that there is a timely, resilient response to any hurricanes or natural disasters."[80] Early in her tenure, Secretary Napolitano ruffled a few feathers with her frank discussion of the problems with the DHS when she first took over the post, arguing that many of the department's initiatives were too expensive, unrealistic, and "too removed from a real-world scenario."[81] Instead, she advocates a "whole nation" approach to security and encourages individual citizens to take action to improve their family's resilience in the face of threats ranging from biological warfare to natural disaster to cyberterrorism. Secretary Napolitano mirrors Flynn's emphasis on strong citizenry, strong infrastructure, and strong recovery and retaliation.[82] While at first glance, it may appear that emphasis on individual resilience is in direct contradiction to the resilience topos of responsibility to fellow Americans, I argue that this is not so. Marlia Banning illustrates that one goal of the neoliberal apparatus is to dismantle government provision for those in need and trust individuals and philanthropic organizations to pick up the slack.[83] In this reasoning, one

cannot (nor should they) rely on government handouts in the time of need, but rely on oneself

and the aid of friends and neighbors. Indeed, renewed emphasis on civil defense and *individual*

resilience in the wake of disasters like Katrina and Greensburg is the first way that sustainability

is linked to national security.

Sustainable Selves, Resilience, and The Extension of National Security

Hay argues that there are three interdependent ways in which the Department of

Homeland Security has been rationalized post-Katrina. First, through the lens of *federalism*, the

government agency is intended as support for local responders. Second, through the frame of

public-private partnerships, the federal government is again given the supporting role while

NGOs are elevated to the first line of civil defense. Third, the DHS can be understood through a

citizen frame, where the individual is responsible for assessing and managing their own risks

with whatever resources they have. Again, the government agency is in a supporting role,

disseminating information and resources to "citizen-soldiers" preparing for and preventing

disaster. This creates "an actively self-defensive citizen-consumer," Hays argues, one who

"depends on private networks of support and personalized regimens of welfare and safety."[84]

And indeed, this new understanding of resilient citizen-security is constituted through

public discourses surrounding national security and American resolve in the face of

vulnerability. As mentioned above, current secretary of the DHS, Janet Napolitano, argues that

resilience is the cornerstone of national security, and draws a parallel between Greensburg, New

Orleans, Oklahoma City, and New York after 9/11. During a speech to commemorate the

fifteenth anniversary of the Oklahoma City bombing, she remarks:

> In big ways and small, resilience is a pillar of our security, and there has been no better
> example than right here in Oklahoma City.

> We've seen it again and again—in the passengers who took matters into their own hands

on September 11th, and indeed again on December 25th last year.

And in the citizens of New Orleans, reclaiming their communities after Katrina, and in Greensburg, Kansas, rebuilding their town after it was destroyed by a tornado in 2007.

All these examples could have ended differently. But the resilience, and the sense of shared responsibility that kicked in each time took them in another direction.[85]

Napolitano provides clear examples of what individual resilience requires: citizens "who took matters into their own hands" and embraced a sense of "shared responsibility" to aid one another in recovery. January 2011 marked the first time that the Secretary of the DHS delivered a "State of Homeland Security" address, indicating that vulnerability and security is still a primary concern and interest for the nation, but also that the state of (and memory of) national security is in question and a clear manifest is needed to guide future policy. In the speech, Secretary Napolitano again argues that:

These are not ordinary times. The kinds of threats we now face demonstrate that our homeland security is a shared responsibility. Only a "whole of nation approach" will bring us to the level of security and resilience we require.[86]

Later in the speech, she insists that, "real security requires the engagement of our entire society."

There are a number of notable things about these two statements. First, all challenges and threats to the nation are framed similarly, be they internal terrorists, foreign attackers, tornado, or a hurricane made worse by human negligence. This broadens the understanding of what national security means, and reinforces that FEMA should remain under the direction of the DHS (a subject that was up for debate during 2010.) Second, it emphasizes the same "shared responsibility" topos for national resilience seen in Presidents Obama and Bush's resilient discourses making sense of Katrina and Greensburg. This overwhelming vulnerability, which President Obama has deemed "the challenges of the 21st century," can only be met and defeated through the efforts of the 'whole nation,' Napolitano attests. Most importantly, however, the

implicit link between resilience and security made in presidential speeches discussed above is made explicit here – national resilience relies on national security, and national security is the responsibility of the individual citizen.

The DHS website provides a number of ideas about how to bolster one's own resilience and individual security. "Protecting the United States from threats like terrorism, natural disasters, and infectious disease is a shared responsibility and everyone has an important role to play," reads the first line of the page devoted to "Preparedness."[87] Some suggestions include making an evacuation kit, creating a family plan, learning first aid to increase self sufficiency, and becoming informed about the types of emergencies your community is most vulnerable to. More recently, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) made an attempt to frame all disasters as similar and to profit from the recent popularity of zombies, vampires, and other supernatural narrative by releasing "Preparedness 101: Zombie Apocalypse."[88] The guide quickly went viral, perhaps spawning individual planning efforts in populations unreached previously. "So what do you need to do before zombies . . . or hurricanes or pandemics, for example, actually happen?" the blog post asks? The page proceeds to inform the individual about steps for families to prep, survive, and emerge resilient from a series of hazards. Community members often assert that they learned the lesson of self-reliance from Katrina. "After Katrina," argues Pam Dashiell of the Holy Cross Neighborhood Associaiton, "it was apparent that we needed to be as resourceful and resilient and *sustain ourselves* as best as possible."[89]

Of note in official discourses surrounding Katrina and Greensburg, however, is the implication that concern for sustainability is the same as concern for national security, and that sustainability can be a vehicle of individual and national resilience. For example Colten, Kates, and Laska argue that one of the most essential lessons learned in Katrina is that "sustainable

development" requires volunteer and stakeholder participation.[90] They continue, "since Katrina, redundancy of safety efforts, including local self-sufficiency, have emerged as resiliency actions . . . planning now stresses the need for multiple lines of defense."[91] In addition to individual resilience, the next line of defense requires a strong, sustainable, and resilient infrastructure.

The Case for Resilient Infrastructure as Sustainability

In *The Weather of the Future: Heat Waves, Extreme Storms, and Other Scenes From a Climate-Changed Planet*, Heidi Cullen argues that climate change is a threat-multiplier, and links shifts in weather patterns to a whole array of security risks.[92] For example, regional political disputes over resources such as water will increase with the onset of droughts, she reasons, increasing the frequency and severity of international conflict. John Ashton, the United Kingdom's first special envoy on climate change, argues that since the end of the Cold War, global warming will be the largest influencing factor on global security. "There is every reason to believer that as the 21st century unfolds, the security story will be bound together with climate change," he insists.[93] And indeed, James Lee warns of just how many foreign threats will be exacerbated by climate change in *The Washington Post*:

> We're used to thinking of climate change as an environmental problem, not a military one, but it's long past time to alter that mindset. Climate change may mean changes in Western lifestyles, but in some parts of the world it will mean far more. Living in Washington, I may respond to global warming by buying a Prius, planting a tree or lowering my thermostat. But elsewhere, people will respond to climate change by building bomb shelters and buying guns.[94]

Lee makes a case for three different climate-related causes of warfare: conflicts arising from scarcity, problems of an increase in abundance as weather shifts make inaccessible resources easier to access, and conflicts over sovereignty as nations lose land to rising ocean levels.[95] Concerns about the savagery of developing nations in the face of climate change is mirrored by coverage of Katrina as "just the beginning" of our global warming woes.

In an opinion piece published in *The New York Times*, Lawrence Joseph writes, "without aggressive preparation, we run the risk of a disaster magnitudes greater than Hurricane Katrina. Little or no electricity means little or no telecommunications, refrigeration, clean water or fuel. Basic law enforcement and national security could be compromised."[96] Eric Pooley similarly warns of "some sort of monstrous, galvanic weather event – epic heat and drought, Katrina on steroids" as a possible result of increased global warming-related threats.[97] Katrina here is positioned as a warning, as a prominent event in recent collective memory that might be experienced again or in even greater consequence if our infrastructure is not strengthened to handle what nature and humankind throws our way. A logical continuation of this argument is that investment in sustainable and resilient infrastructure is a worthwhile vehicle for national security. "Energy independence, national security and U.S. competitiveness are inextricably linked to infrastructure development," insists Emil Henry Jr. in *The Washington Post*.[98] Whitford Remer argues that Katrina made clear the need to build "resiliency" through sustainable, "climate-adaptive water management" to bolster the security of cities all along the coast.[99]

After Katrina, a group of scientists published "Lessons for Community Resilience" in *Environment* Magazine. "The city's ability to rebound from repeated encounters with high water in the past relied heavily on short-term flood protection remedies, rather than the more sustainable strategy of enhancing overall community resilience" they insist.[100] Resilience, Colten, Kates, and Laska assert, is a matter of "sustained recovery," which in turn "relies on a secure levee system" and other appropriate infrastructure improvements, such as raised structures.[101] Here, sustainable infrastructure begets material resilience, which begets national security.

Oil Independence and National Security

Flynn's third requirement for national resilience is our ability as Americans to strike back

ferociously after an attack or quickly respond to a natural disaster.[102] This can manifest in both

material and moral resilience. Post-Katrina, officials and environmental activists latch onto

retaliation as a national security concern and link our ability to strike back to "sustainable

energy," which they argue allows for independence from foreign oil. In President Obama's 2011

State of the Union Address, he emphasizes "winning the future" by rediscovering the innovation

that America was known for throughout history. One of the avenues for innovation he names is

"clean energy," a way to become resilient in the face of economic recession. This is a

continuation of the argument Obama used on the campaign trail in 2008 that the United States

was irresponsibly "borrowing money from China to pay Saudi Arabia for fuel to move gas

guzzlers down American roads."[103] Colin Beaven, author of the *No Impact Man* blog, book, and

recent documentary, entreats:

> If the US is smart, we get the chance to sell the rest of the world renewable energy and
> we can stop depending on the unstable regimes which supply us oil. So, if you want an
> energy system that will bring us jobs, national security while protecting the habitat that
> we depend upon for our health, happiness and security, join with me by asking President
> Obama to deliver that system.[104]

David Wallace, Director of the *Greensburg Greentown* nonprofit laments that

"environmental concern isn't seen as important. Not as important as [makes finger quotes]

fighting terror." His organization is devoted to convincing residents and outside investors that

greening the town is worthwhile, and so one of the techniques Wallace employs is emphasizing

the personal security benefits to building a green home or city structure. In an interview, Wallach

describes his standard approach to convincing Kansan residents and business owners that

sustainable choices are directly related to individual resilience, oil independence, and secure

futures. The following excerpt incorporates all three topoi of resilience, and all three of Flynn's requirements for a resilient nation:

> First, I appeal to safety from future tornados. The structures are sustainable in the sense that they won't disintegrate in a future storm. Then I make connections to our security as a community, and the fact that rural towns with distinct identities are the only ones thriving. If that isn't enough, I talk about conservation and how we're at war for oil, and how Kansans won't be dying for national security if we just use less.

Embedded in these discourses is the argument that climate change threatens security, and therefore that mitigation of climate change and incorporating climate-adaptive design is the same as bolstering individual and national security. It is an argument about networks of people, and the linkages between community planning and the strength of our nation as a whole.

Conclusion

In this chapter I explore the three topoi of the resilience ideograph as applied to Greensburg, Kansas and New Orleans after Katrina: opportunity in tragedy, emerging stronger after disaster, and responsibility for fellow citizens. I argue that these resilient rhetorics serve important functions for nation building and the constitution of collective memory. First, they can unite a divided population in "imagined community" as resilient Americans. Second, these tales of resilience act as instructive parables, and Greensburg and New Orleans act as synecdoche for the nation as a whole. I then connect concern for resilience post-Katrina to a paradigm shift in discourses of U.S. national security. In the wake of FEMA's disastrous handling of Katrina, focus on preparedness and top-down security initiatives lose cultural capital. The new administrator of FEMA and secretary of the DHS replace these cold war and 9/11 security rhetorics with a new concentration on resilience and multi-layer tactics for preparation, mitigation, and recovery. As Stephen Flynn argues, this code shift to resilience is so powerful because it allows officials to (1) tap into civil society's strength, (2) bolster the economic and

physical strength of the nation by building a tougher infrastructure, and (3) assure an increased resistance to (and recovery from) disaster as well as a swifter recovery from disaster.

Furthermore, I maintain that the shift from homeland security and preparedness to resilience provides a discursive space to approach sustainable development as a security issue. First, and most commonly, resilience relies upon the individual. With a loss of faith in the federal government to protect and rescue them, residents of New Orleans expressed that the most important lesson of the storm was self-reliance and individual resilience. The DHS embraces this chance to utilize civil society as the "first line of defense."[105] Sustainability initiatives, such as growing one's own food, and using solar power instead of relying on the grid coincide well with the emphasis on individual resilience. Barbara Kingsolver, for example, in her account of her family's attempt to grow their own food for a self-sustaining year writes, "in my view, homeland security derives from having enough potatoes," something she no longer trusts to the food industrial complex.[106] Relatedly, resilience relies upon energy independence in addition to self-reliance. Building off Flynn's second, point, sustainable energy practices can be marketed and framed as methods for augmenting and increasing national security. Third, resilience depends upon sustainable infrastructure. While many scholars lament the use of 9/11 and Katrina by government officials to impose intrusive surveillance measures on the polis, restructure the federal government into a military state, and turn cities into war zones, I maintain that after Katrina, another subtle shift occurred in national security discourses that is potentially more productive and encouraging. As explored in chapter three, sustainability is often presented as a luxury and concern of wealthy liberal elites, instead of a burden shared globally. Collective memory and national identity in the post-9/11 and post-Katrina United States, however, insists that national security should be a top priority for all citizens. When the logical connection is

made between resilient infrastructure and sustainable development, or alternative energy and

national security, the ability for climate skeptics to swiftly end the conversation is lessened.

Finally, these two cases illustrate a radical contingency; they allow us to explore how

collective memory is shaped when natural disaster dashes some or all material artifice, when the

level and velocity of change is so great that the identity of a nation and a community needs to be

reinscribed. In this chapter I have focused on national collective memory, which is perhaps first

on the scene when it comes to making sense of Greensburg and Katrina for a national audience

and using the events to shape understandings of America's past (always resilient), present

(uncertain, but hopeful), and future (better, stronger, greener.) Resilience is a contested and

ambigious term, but it is a watchword of the 21st century, and its meaning and use must be

monitored by rhetorical critics. In the next chapter, I tackle the interplay between national and

local or vernacular manifestations of collective memory.

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[1] Definition from the Community and Regional Resilience Initiative (CARRI), quoted in Craig E. Colten, Robert W. Kates, and Shirley B. Laska, "Three Years After Katrina: Lessons for Community Resilience," *Environment Magazine*, September/October 2008, 38.

[2] Barack Obama, "Address to the Joint Session of Congress," Washington DC, February 24, 2009.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Traditionally, parables refer to "allegorical or metaphorical" sayings or narratives, and can also refer to an enigmatic saying or maxim. However, they also refer to realistic stories or examples told to convey a spiritual lesson or insight. William Kirkwood argues that rhetoricians do not pay enough attention to how parables function as example, not just metaphor. See Oxford English Dictionary, "Parable," accessed April 1, 2011, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/137268?rskey=Uob6GM&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid.; William G. Kirkwood, "Parables as Metaphors and Examples," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 85 (1985): 422-440.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Barack Obama, "Fifth Anniversary of Katrina Speech at Xavier University," New Orleans, LA, August 29, 2010.

[7] Morris III., "Lincoln and the Politics of Queer Memory," 90.

[8] Barbara Biesecker, "Renovating the National Imaginary: Prolegomenon on Contemporary Paregoric Rhetoric," in *Framing Public Memory*, ed. Kendall Phillips, 212-247 (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004).

[9] Banning, *Manufacturing Uncertainty*.

[10] This is a label imposed upon the presidency by newspaper coverage. See David Jackson, "Bush Lauds Town's Spirit of Resilience Following Tornado," *USA Today*, May 10, 2007, 3A.

[11] For discussion of resilience in an international context, see Hamilton Bean, Lisa Keränen, and Margaret Durfy, "'This is London': Cosmopolitan Nationalism and the Discourse of Resilience in the Case of the 7/7 Terrorist Attacks," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 14 (2011):427 - 456.

[12] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2006.)

[13] Banning, *Manufacturing Uncertainty*.

[14] Stephen Flynn, *America the Vulnerable: How our Government is Failing to Protect us from Terrorism* (New York: Random House, 2004.)

[15] Stephen Graham, *Cities Under Siege* (London: Verso, 2010).

[16] Ibid., xi.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Setha Low and Neil Smith, *The Politics of Public Space* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

[19] Ibid., 1.

[20] Stephen Flynn, *The Edge of Disaster: Rebuilding a Resilient Nation* (New York: Random House, 2007), xvi.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid., xxi.

[23] Antonio Sanchez-Escalonilla, "Hollywood and the Rhetoric of Panic: Popular Genres of Action and Fantasy in the Wake of the 9/11 Attacks," *Journal of Popular Film and Television* (2010): 10-20.

[24] Graham, *Cities Under Siege*.

[25] Kevin Rozario, *Culture of Calamity: Disaster and the Making of Modern America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 3.

[26] Ibid., 8.

[27] Bean, Keränen, and Durfy, "'This is London,'" 8.

[28] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

[29] Ibid., 7.

[30] John L. Jackson, *Real Black: Adventures in Racial Sincerity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 13.

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Chapter 6

Remembering Disaster: Authenticity, Architecture, and Memory

Out desire for authentic memories and city experiences reveals an empathy for lost totalities, even though no one actually speaks out in favor of a unified city. – Christine Boyer[1]

In both Greensburg and the Lower Ninth Ward, physical markers of the past were largely destroyed or washed away by natural disaster without concern for human feeling. The very dwellings in which Greensburg residents worked, played, worshiped, and socialized were reduced to rubble. In the Lower Ninth Ward, twelve (or more) feet of flood water liquidated any personal possessions not initially razed by the hundred mile per hour winds. Houses near the levy breech on the canal banks literally washed down the street and out into the Mississippi river. And so, these cases raise a series of difficult question for citizens: how do you reconcile your new community identity with the old? How do you remember disaster, commemorate the tragedy, and move forward into a new and sustainable future? As illustrated throughout this study, there are many marked differences between Greensburg and the L9W. Despite these differences, however, some commonalities in commemorative impulses and rhetorical attempts at constructing public memory emerged. First, in both communities citizens took it upon themselves to create grassroots literary projects so that victims' "voices" could be heard and preserved in the public record. Second, in both places vernacular commemorations and memorials were erected long before citizens or public figures made any plans for official structures. Third, stakeholders considered choices about memorializing the past communal decisions in which any interested citizen should have a say. Finally, memorial plans also became potent sites of contestation over whether, what, and how commemoration should take place.

Marouf Hasian, Jr. calls for rhetorical critics to "do more than simply describe the existence of some public memory or trace the evolution of those collective memories – we need to go further and offer informed judgments about the consequential impact of believing in certain rhetorical figurations."[2] This is not easy, he concedes; it requires looking at several different layers of discourse simultaneously and becoming a "socially active critic," who is not afraid to comment on the potentially problematic nature of some sites of memory.[3] In this chapter, I attempt to answer this call and analyze the vernacular and official artifacts of commemoration, in various degrees of completion, in the L9W and Greensburg. I argue that concern for authenticity dominates conversations surrounding the construction of a new Greensburg Museum in Kansas, the Lower Ninth Ward Katrina Memorial, and a slew of proposed memorial structures in New Orleans. I conclude by reflecting on the potential implications of these memorial projects and of the preferred visions of the past advocated by each. Before I analyze these different textual fragments, however, I must clarify the link between memory and space, and explain what I mean by authenticity.

Connecting Memory and Place

In the words of many interviewed residents in Greensburg and the Ninth Ward, physical place, memory, and personal identity are inextricably linked. Actor Wendell Pierce, in an interview detailing his efforts to rebuild his boyhood neighborhood Pontchartrain Park, states matter-of-factly that "you are intimately connected to the city, because, you know, your home is your soul." "It makes me feel so good to be back in my own home," exclaims Gloria Mae Guy, a resident of the Lower Ninth Ward whose house of 28 years was washed away by a levee breach. "My home is where all my memories are, and I thank God for helping these folks who have helped me come back to where I belong."[4] After construction began on his new house, Todd, a

longtime resident of Greensburg, is relieved to have a home to return to because Greensburg is

his "belonging place." [5] Equating one's home and one's soul as Pierce does or equating a home

to one's "belonging place" are powerful rhetorical moves because they connect notions of self,

of our essence as a person, with the places we inhabit.

Community members interviewed by the press also link physical place (whether it be the

home, or their larger neighborhood) with their capacity to recall the past. Often, residents caught

in limbo express concern that memories will be "lost" without a concrete connection to memory

artifacts collected over the course of their lifetime. "Man, man, man," exclaims Mr. Reddick as

he places his hands over his face and closes his eyes, "This house of ours is about to fall over. I

can't save this. It's devastated. That's my house. That's my past. Damn! How am I going to tell

mama we ain't got nothing left?" [6] The material elements of Mr. Reddick's home are gone, and

with them, his entire past. Edward Casey clarifies this impulse when he argues that places of

trauma are so powerful because "the wound inflicted" is both to physical structures and "to the

American body politic…indeed, the two together, indissociable." [7] In other words, it is

impossible to separate the citizenry from the spaces where they live, work, and enact that

citizenship. "Mourning," Casey insists, "can be of place, lost place." [8] Evidence from Greensburg

and New Orleans substantiates this claim. For example, in a *Times-Picayune* article entitled

"PLACE FOR THE PAIN," one reporter writes:

> The intersection of North Claiborne Avenue and Tennessee Street is a reminder of the
> rushing water that followed Hurricane Katrina and overtook the Lower 9th Ward.
> Crumbled homes still spill their contents onto the sidewalk. Nearby, gas stations and
> other businesses remain shuttered…those reminders of the storm, local residents say,
> make it the perfect place to build a Katrina monument.[9]

Once the monument was erected, this "place for the pain" becomes even more significant a

gathering place. In February of 2007, for example, 150 African American clergymen from all

over the country gathered at the Hurricane Katrina Memorial in the Lower Ninth Ward to pray for the future of the neighborhood and greater New Orleans. During the devotional, many speakers focused on their fear that culture and memory would be forgotten if residents did not or could not come home. "So much of American culture is centered in this area," laments Councilwoman Cynthia Willard-Lewis, "and without the people living here, the question is, those things that have not been written down – the oral traditions – will they be lost forever?"[10] This site has been sacrilized, largely because of its potentiality to jog citizen's memories, to inspire recollection, and to enable prosthetic memory for those who did not experience Katrina first hand.[11] The sacred space serves as memory aid, so that culture, history, and personal narratives are not forgotten.

However, sacred spaces are not the only places that are memory-laden. As Christine Boyer maintains, memory is inscribed on the city itself.[12] Utopian wishes, social norms, carefully constructed histories are all invested in architecture, she argues. "Behind every city plan and architectural project lay the wildly utopic belief that society was progressing toward a better future, that industrial production when harnessed by collective desires would erase want, eradicate disease, and supplant revolution."[13] She insists, however, that for critics or scholars to fully be able to read the cityscape as text, they must look at the city not only in formal or functional terms, but figural and interpretive ways as well. To a rhetorical critic, this phrasing may appear backward, but it reminds us that struggles over vision, memory, history, authority, symbol, and material are wrapped up in any cityscape. Furthermore, Boyer artfully exposes the often ignored or forgotten fact that spectators mark cities, places, and spaces with our own desires.

Memory and Authenticity

Kendall Phillips traces the link between rhetoric and memory back to its classical roots in

Plato's dialogues, and argues that fascination with memory originated out of concern for

misremembering and human capacity for false beliefs or false knowledge.[14] While displaced

residents express their concerns in terms of the past being "lost" or "forgotten," community

members are also concerned with misremembering, or remembering differently. Barbie Zelizer

argues that "we all behave in the context of many narrative histories," and these histories can

conflict in irreconcilable ways.[15] In Greensburg and the Lower Ninth Ward, residents often

justify their position on the different commemorative projects by arguing for its *authenticity*.

Remaining "true" to roots while rebuilding from scratch is of primary concern. For residents,

authenticity or staying true seems to indicate that present efforts can be easily reconciled with the

past, and with that resident's sense of community identity. As explored in chapter three, a few

(though vocal) dissenters are unsure about the direction Greensburg is headed because they feel

in some way left behind, or that the rebirth of Greensburg as a sustainable mecca is not in

keeping with community values, history, and strength. One Greensburg citizen, for example,

implies in an interview that the "true" history of Greensburg might be masked in the new

museum.

> Katie: What is the plan for the new Big Well museum, do you know?
>
> Rick: I don't know. We haven't gotten so far. There's been talk about the storm, and putting the green stuff in there, you know, as a tourist draw. But uh, I think it should be about the well, you know? That's *the real story*. It's a piece of Kansan history. And the storm should be in there when we discuss its impact on the well and the damage and how we fixed that.
>
> Katie: Uh huh

> Rick: And the tornado was just one night. It was just one night in a long history of this town and what we stand for. The best way to honor the people who lost their lives in the storm is to *be true* to our town and what we stand for.

Here, Rick is concerned that the authentic history of Greensburg, including the men who achieved notoriety for constructing the world's largest hand-dug well, will be overpowered by a new emphasis in town on eco-tourism and on the storm. Rick, in essence, prefers a vision of the town's past marked by hard work and engineering innovation, and he worries that this past may be misrepresented in the new museum or bulldozed by concerns over the town's green future.

As many communication scholars have argued, "authenticity" is always a rhetorical, constructed phenomenon.[16] Crew and Sims contend that authenticity is essentially about legitimizing how the past should be remembered.[17] "Authenticity is not about factuality or reality. It is about authority," they insist.[18] Authenticity is not objective, in other words, it is about perception and reconciliation with the past. My focus, then, is on how residents and cultural authorities seek to construct "authentic" narratives of the past, and how those constructions may affect collective memory and community identity. I remarked in chapter five that national identity as a manifestation of collective memory reached the scene first. In this chapter, I tackle those manifestations that arrive a bit later: city planning efforts and official and vernacular commemoration. I argue both the spaces of everyday life and sacred memory places are memory-laden, often presenting conflicting representations of the past and visions for the future. Greg Dickinson insists that authenticity is a form of cultural capital, especially "in a time of discomfort and incoherency."[19] The Oxford English Dictionary defines authenticity as "genuineness," or "as being real, actual; reality."[20] Modern colloquialisms, such as "keeping it real," or "be real" attempt to distill notions of authenticity, and across cultural groups, a lack of authenticity is considered criminal.[21]

In recent years, there has been a proliferation of communication studies exploring issues of memory and authenticity. Bob Craig argues that much of the metadiscourse surrounding Obama's presidential campaign focused upon whether he was sincere, or was employing "mere rhetoric," false speech peppered with inauthentic displays of emotion.[22] Marouf Hasian, Jr. explores accusations of inauthenticity in public remembrances and memoirs of the Holocaust, especially how "the child's voice" can be constructed as either authentic for its emotional power, or inauthentic for its imprecision and unreliability.[23] Stephen A. King explores how museums, public memory, and authenticity intersect in the construction of one version of the history of Delta Blues in Clarksdale, Mississippi.[24] He argues that the museum promotes "authentic" images of primitiveness and poverty of the blues musicians to satisfy white tourists' prosthetic memories of what the blues *should* be. Both Hasain, Jr. and King produce masterful studies of the interrelated politics of remembrance and authenticity. While King focuses on how official, material representations – a museum – are strategic attempts at preserving the interests of the dominant culture, Hasain, Jr. focuses on personal narratives of the past, complicating our understanding of authenticity by arguing that untruthful assertions can still offer "accurate *representations* of authentic public Holocaust memories."

In the next sections, I build on this foundation to discuss the interplay between many different public memory artifacts attempting to construct an authentic remembrance of national disaster and community history. For Hurricane Katrina, I focus primarily on the Lower Ninth Ward Katrina Memorial. Additionally, I analyze media discourse surrounding a larger proposed Katrina Memorial Project, vernacular memorials, and commemorative ritual. In Greensburg, less time has passed and fewer memorial sites have been constructed. There, I primarily focus on vernacular discourses surrounding a proposed new Big Well Museum, which would incorporate

town history and memorialize the tornado. I compliment the analyses of the artifacts themselves with the discourse of stakeholders, often concerned with the authenticity of these memorials' vision of the past, present, and future. I begin by exploring one of the impulses both these communities share: the desire to preserve citizens' authentic "voices" by publishing personal narratives of the storm and its aftermath.

Preserving Voices – Narrative Memorial Projects

The University of New Orleans created the *Katrina Narrative Project* in October of 2005. Currently housed in the University of New Orleans Library, the project includes hundreds of interviews and accounts of citizens' experiences during the hurricane. UNO students collected the narratives, largely while they were still evacuated from the city. In *Voices Rising: Stories From the Katrina Narrative Project*, editors narrowed hundreds of accounts to 31 pieces they felt were "representative of the greater collection."[25] Published in 2008, the short narratives run the gamut from heart-breakingly bleak to cautiously hopeful. As editor Rebecca Antoine expresses in the introduction, "Despite all of our losses and grief, our stories are not only about all that is gone. Above the still visible water lines, above the muck and destruction Hurricane Katrina left behind, our voices rise with stories of survival and courage, tales of the generosity of strangers, and the will to rebuild and restore our lives and our city."[26] The stated goal of the project is to foster the memory of *people* affected by the storm, not just the hurricane itself. "Transcending the images and headlines portrayed in the media, these are the *true accounts* of trauma and survival told by the people who endured them," the back cover reads.[27] One book review insists that this volume forces readers to "come face-to-face with the stark reality" of the storm, and that the volume's power arises from the fact that it is "miles away from academic analysis."[28] "There is only one real way to understand what hurricane Katrina was really like," insists another

reviewer, "and that's to hear it straight from those who endured it."[29] Reviewers and editors both deem first person accounts more authentic, more "real" than mediated accounts. In a 21st century milieu where public officials often lie and then claim their statements should not be taken as fact, or where the chief of the New Orleans Police Department visits Oprah and weaves narratives of gangs raping and murdering after Katrina which were later falsified, it is easy to understand how individual experiences are assigned a higher "authenticity" rating than secondary reports.

In the afterward, Frederick Barton expresses that one of the goals of the project is "preservation."[30] "I began to want to capture as many of those stories as possible and to preserve them in our UNO library for scholars to study in the future," Barton explains.[31] It is indeed a powerful volume; I could get through none of the narratives without crying, and therefore had to spread out my reading of the text over a few weeks time. A less explicit goal of the project, however, is to convince readers of the inappropriate (and inauthentic) framing of Katrina by media professionals as "an African-American story."[32] Many of the narratives express the experiences of New Orleanians who lived in "the sliver by the river," a small splinter of the city along the Mississippi that flood waters did not touch. These neighborhoods are predominantly white and wealthy. Residents of the upper class, white Lakeview neighborhood suffered flood waters just as high as the famous Ninth Ward, Barton reminds readers. "Katrina was a color-blind and class-indifferent scourge," he writes, "and the torments of her flood waters were inflicted on New Orleanians of every skin pigment and income bracket."[33] While Barton does concede that poorer residents had a harder time with insurance companies, he emphasizes the egalitarian nature of disaster, arguing that all citizens suffered because "Katrina was an ironically democratizing force."[34] The volume reflects a concern for authenticity by arguing that mass media have erroneously presented Katrina as a black problem, a framing that the project editors

reject because it excludes the authentic and valid experiences of white citizens, wealthy citizens, or New Orleanians who did not lose everything.

Barton is correct in pointing out that wealthy Lakeview did suffer as much water as Gentilly or the Lower Ninth Ward. However, Lakeview was never threatened with demolition after the storm; it is almost entirely recovered five years later, while many other black and/or poor neighborhoods only retain a small percentage of pre-storm residents. Numerous studies proved that black and poor residents suffered housing and insurance discrimination. Then again, Barton makes a good point that comparing peoples' suffering in the wake of disaster is an unseemly and inexact science. In the second episode of HBO's *Treme*, a drama centered around many New Orleanians' attempts to rebuild their lives three months after the storm, a character expresses similar frustration to Barton's. The character is a street musician, and after he finishes playing a song, a group of white, very clean cut, mardi-gras beaded, young people clap enthusiastically and tell him it was great. "First time in New Orleans?" he sourly asks through a clenched jaw. The kids reply cheerfully that it is, and that they are there with their church group. "We wanted to help out," they insist, "After, you know, we saw what was happening in the Ninth Ward." This does it; the musician snaps. "Had you even ever heard of the Ninth Ward before Katrina?" he yells pointedly. The kids try and recover a little by asking to hear something "authentic," to which he mockingly responds, "how about 'When the Saints Go Marching In'?" and asks for twenty bucks in payment. Here again, jumping aboard a trend or getting one's information from the media means one is inauthentic, not to be trusted, and unwelcome, the worst kind of outsider.

A second textual memory project in the aftermath of Katrina, however, frames the storm in a very different manner, despite a shared concern for authentic representation. *Voices from the*

Storm: The People of New Orleans on Hurricane Katrina and it's Aftermath is part of Dave Egger's *Voice of Witness* series, which focuses on first-person accounts of human rights and social justice issues.[35] Membership in this series already connotes an emphasis on marginalized voices very different to those accounted for in *Voices Rising*. Thirteen residents of New Orleans are interviewed in this "rich tapestry of oral history," and according to editors, the accounts "accurately chronicle the racial discrimination and outright neglect" endured after the storm. The volume is so important, editors argue, because it archives the "day-to-day experience" of survivors and provides a space for "victims of this tragedy to finally speak for themselves."[36] The stories must be heard because they are "incredibly honest," and "sincere."[37] Here, we see a slightly different rationale for the project, but one still rooted in authenticity. Although the introduction does take a backhanded swing at the media when the editors emphasize that "finally" we can hear from the victims, mediated accounts are less of the villain in this volume than the U.S. government and institutional discrimination. The editors include a short section in the back of the book discussing method, where they explain that a call was put out and a large network of volunteers recorded preliminary interviews. From there, the editors selected those interviews they felt were most representative, and interviewed those subject again. The interviews ranged from two to eight hours. Transcripts were edited down, but editors Vollen and Ying are sure to make explicit that "in no cases were changes made to the context or meaning of the narrators' words."[38] Furthermore, Vollen and Ying explain that they are "dedicated to presenting the stories of the interviewees as accurately as possible," and that the only way to accomplish this goal of authenticity is to give the interviewees final approval. Additionally, the *Voices of Witness* website archives the original and complete transcripts for any interested party to access.

Narrations are divided into sections: "Life Before the Storm," "The Storm" (which is further divided by day from August 27th through September 4th,) "The Week After," "Weeks After the Storm," and "Looking Back." Additional information is provided in appendixes, including maps of flooded neighborhoods, National Weather Service warnings, demographic information, a *Good Morning America* interview with George W. Bush, and a historical reckoning of death statistics for hurricanes over time. The "victims" chosen for the volume were predominantly ethnic and racial minorities, mostly black. That they are framed as victims instead of "survivors" also presents the storm differently from Antoine's *Voices Rising*. All narrators are extremely aware of race, and how racial discrimination has affected their entire lives, not just the storm. Certainly these victims are not framed as passive – the first narrative comes from a woman who piloted a project in the St. Thomas Housing Project to "undo racism" one person at a time. Another narrative tells the story of a priest who stayed behind to fend for those who were unable to evacuate. However, these certainly are people who have been wronged. The wrongdoer is not "the storm" as it is for Antoine, but the institutional response to the storm or lack thereof. This memory text projects a vision of a Katrina caused and exploited by government negligence, racist practice, and military abuse. Two of the thirteen narrators were wrongfully imprisoned, one suffered National Guardsmen training their guns on her children's foreheads, and all narrators expressed feeling abandoned or condemned by their government. Like *Voices Rising*, *Voices of the Storm* locates authenticity in unmasking the "untold" personal stories of Katrina. The two volumes also claim legitimacy because editors feel their selected narratives are "representative" of larger populations and common experiences. Despite common claims of authenticity, however, the emphases and framing of these two collections paint very different pictures of Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans, and the identity of the local citizenry.

The citizens of Greensburg, led by resident Janice Haney, also published volumes of personal stories about the night of the storm and the days that followed. *Greensburg: The Twisted Tales* was a "cathartic project," Haney insists, a way of capturing Kiowa County's history while it was still fresh in peoples' minds.[39] "To me," she explains to the local paper, "it was just kind of a healing process to kind of get it out of my system because otherwise, you just kept going over and over it."[40] Other participants in these memoir projects expressed that their writing filled a need to "bear witness." The *Voices of the Storm* volume also employs this word – Witness – as a way of expressing the desire to expose the underlying truth of the storm, the authentic account not polluted by media professionals or political officials. Bearing witness is an attempt to include a perspective that would otherwise go unheard, and often it is grounded in the site where the initial action occurred.[41] Phaedra Pezzullo argues that during toxic tours for example, "an invitation to identify with people, places, and arguments asks the tourist to *witness* what is going on in a way that invites him or her to feel implicated in the fate of those people, places, and arguments."[42] Social movements use witnessing in two ways, she argues: either stakeholders witness and give a voice to their own experiences, or movements invite outsiders to visit and witness a perspective that would otherwise be unknown.[43] For all three of these narrative projects, readers engage in a kind of armchair witnessing; we are able to visit the scene of the tragedy through the words of those who experienced the worst of it. It is easy to take these gripping tales as reality, but we must remember that they are still edited, still selected as the "best," or "most authentic" accounts of the storm to support the worldview championed by the volumes editor(s). In addition to literary memorial projects, both Greensburg and Katrina became the sites of informal vernacular memorializing after the storms. These personal artifacts are also

presented as authentic, because in this case they represent raw outpourings of emotion and unedited feeling.

Vernacular Memorials

In the wake of violent deaths and tragedies, active vernacular expressions of mourning are common in public forums. After the Oklahoma City bombing, for example, citizens brought teddy bears, flowers, and handwritten notes to the metal fence enclosing the rubble of the bombing site.[44] After the September 11th terrorist attacks in New York, similar tokens were left in the openings of the fence surrounding Ground Zero. Jorgensen-Earp and Lanzilotti argue that such vernacular outpourings of emotion transcend boundaries between public and private spheres and offer "both individual solace and collective redemption in the face of public tragedy."[45] Again, the physical locus of a disaster or tragedy becomes sacred, a designated space for mourning and remembrance.

At the post office on Loyola Avenue in New Orleans, mourning relatives and friends posted funeral biographies and pictures of loved ones who died in the storm. Conceived by the New Orleans city council and initially unveiled August 29th 2006, many postal workers describe the memorial as "emotionally overwhelming," especially if workers learn someone they knew had died by seeing their image on display. One posting for sisters and "Southern ladies" Deborah and Delia reads, "Delia loved the Saints, college basketball and growing flowers on her back porch."[46] The entry details the sisters' desperate attempt at survival, including hanging a red scarf out the window and scrawling "HELP" on the window in red lipstick.[47] Residents can post images and biographies themselves, or send them to a designated postal worker for inclusion in the memorial. In 2007, the display made a shift into the realm of the official when it was moved to the downtown branch of the New Orleans Public Library, its permanent home.

Fig. 6.1. Vernacular memorials in the Ninth Ward. Image reproduced with the permission of the I Am Waters Foundation.

Other vernacular memorials quickly popped up all over the city (See Fig. 6.1). Brad Pitt's *Make It Right* foundation erected what they called "The Pink Project" before any homes were built (See Fig. 6.2). The 150 pink tents, which glowed at night, were meant to be " a memorial partly to the random destruction of countless homes and partly to the right of the areas' [sic] residents to their former community."[48] The project was also intended as a "calling card" for Pitt's MIR9 foundation to help raise enough capital to start building homes.

Fig 6.2. The Pink Project. Image reproduced with permission of Betterlivingthroughdesign.com

A local artist created a street memorial in the Ninth Ward featuring a series of black heads made of Styrofoam, placed on stakes. The piece was called "Field of Silent Screams," and was meant to invoke the many black, poor residents of the Lower Ninth who asked for help and received none.[49] However, National Guardsmen quickly dismantled the display.[50] In the Bywater on St. Claude Avenue, two residents drove wooden crosses into the median and spray-painted a cadaver transport case with the words, "RIP Lower 9."[51] The same lament was etched permanently into their arms. In fact, tattoo parlors across the city reported an enormous surge in business after the storm. "Far more than the official Hurricane Katrina memorial in the Lower 9th Ward," writes one reporter, "the fleur de lis blooming on biceps across the city commemorate the disaster."[52] Bubba Welborn, interviewed by the *New York Times* justifies his "I survived" tattoo by explaining that "I don't want to forget the storm…That's the thing that chased me out of my city."[53]

John Bodnar argues that public memory emerges from the "intersection of official and vernacular cultural expressions."[54] While official memorials speak to universal ideals, he insists, vernacular memorials challenge social unity and the accepted narrative of events.[55] The personal nature of left objects can assert the human pain, anger, and sorrow of the event in ways that combat the soaring rhetoric of official monuments. Illich coined the term "Vernacular Culture," or culture of the majority.[56] Ordinary citizens' ideas of what a public commemoration should be is diverse and ever-changing, he argues, based upon the first-hand experience of real people in real communities. Bodnar explained it well when he claimed that the difference between the vernacular and the official was that "vernacular expressions convey what social reality really feels like rather than what it should be like."[57] Those who engage in these unruly vernacular public expressions are "rhetorical pilgrims," and sites where public memory is given concrete form are not "univocal celebrations of our collective past, but rhetorical battlegrounds."[58]

By the time I visited Greensburg, most vernacular commemorations were gone and the city was swiftly rebuilding. I have only second hand accounts of most of the vernacular outpourings of emotion. Many condemned homes, for example, were spray painted with inspiring messages, such as "Can't Hold Kansas Down," or "Greensburg STRONG," and American flags hung in the windows of many destroyed homes. Handmade signs around town focused more on positive messages than the outpourings of anger and sorrow seen in the Ninth Ward. For example, young residents painted a sign cheerfully thanking the hundreds of volunteers for helping rebuild their town (See Fig. 6.3). At the new Greensburg high school, bits of plywood decorate the construction fence (See Fig. 6.5). Garnished with the graduating year of each grade housed in the school and handpainted stars, the signs were first created a month after the tornado to cheer up the dreary trailer compound where classes were held for two years before

the new school opened this past August. Now, according to resident Matt, they "act as a reminder of what we made it through."

Fig. 6.3. Vernacular Memorials in Greensburg. Image reproduced with the permission of Greensburg Greentown.

While vernacular memorials appeared in both communities, the visions of the past and future are quite different. Vernacular memorials in New Orleans are treated largely as a way to, in the words of a fellow volunteer, "stick it to the man." Graffiti spouting clear messages, such as "BP=Bad" covered abandoned buildings throughout the neighborhood (see Fig. 6.4.), and local artists set up memorial pieces in public thoroughfares to illustrate government oversight and prevent forgetting.

Fig 6. 4. One example of graffiti on abandoned buildings in the Ninth Ward. Photograph by Katherine M. Cruger, June 12, 2010.

More hopeful vernacular memorials were still coded as marginalized, as with Fig 6.1 where

residents assert their right to return to the neighborhood and their community resilience. In

Greensburg, vernacular memorials evoked patriotism instead of mistrust, and gratitude instead of

sorrow. These memorials largely present a hopeful future for the town.

Fig. 6.5. Memorial stars decorating the fence around the Greensburg High School build site. Photograph taken in January 11, 2010 by Katherine M. Cruger.

It is important to acknowledge, however, that the distinction between vernacular and official commemoration is not always easy or cleancut. The Loyola Avenue memorial entered the realm of the official when it was moved from the street to a library archive, for example. And sometimes permanent structures are designed and implemented by residents instead of public officials or planners, lending them an air of vernacularity. The Lower Ninth Ward Katrina Memorial is just such an instance.

The Lower Ninth Ward Memorial

Fig. 6.6. The Lower Ninth Ward Memorial. Photograph taken by Katherine M. Cruger, July 16, 2010.

A modest memorial currently stands in the Lower Ninth Ward, one genuinely embraced by local citizens since its unveiling on August 27th, 2006. Financed by a $7,500 donation, it is tasteful without being extravagant, advocates claim.[59] Located at the intersection of North

Claiborne and Tennessee, the memorial pops into view just as you cross the Claiborne Bridge,

one of only two ways into the Ninth Ward since it is cloistered from the rest of the city by water.

Cynthia Willard-Lewis, the ward's City Council representative, spearheaded the project and

claims "it will be a tribute to the suffering and devastation" felt in her district.[60] The piece is

comprised of a few different elements. In the center stands the foundation of a house up on

cement blocks (a common and cheap tactic used in the neighborhood to guard from moderate

flooding.) Two bright red walls are framed, and on what would be the porch sits two red chairs,

meant to represent the Lower Ninth Ward's friendly "stoop culture."[61] Concrete stairs lead up to

the structure (See Fig. 6.6). Presumably, these stairs are meant to evoke the eerie abandoned

stoops seen all around the city where homes have washed away (or been demolished) and a

lonely concrete slab is all that remains. In the window of one of the structure's wall frame is a

sign that reads "I AM COMING HOME! I will rebuild! I am New Orleans." This is a replica of

the signs posted all over the Ninth Ward in the months after Katrina to indicate to neighbors and

the feared demolition crews that residents intended to rebuild.

Fig. 6.7. The memorial's pillars, indicating water levels in the Ninth Ward, Photographed by Katherine M. Cruger, July 16, 2010.

Arranged in a semicircle around this main structure are a series of five more red chairs. Then

behind the structure and to the right is a series of twelve blue pillars ranging from one foot to

twelve feet high, which represent different water levels during the flooding (See Fig. 6.7).

Finally, a six foot granite marker is placed off to the side (See Fig. 6.8). Shaped like a tombstone,

the stone reads, "In grateful recognition to the legacy of courage and love, this monument is

dedicated to the victims and survivors of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita."

Fig. 6.8. The granite marker at the memorial site, Photographed by Katherine M. Cruger, July 16, 2010.

Stull and Lee Architects are responsible for the design, and expressed to the press that their most important mandate was to "find an *appropriate* expression" of the pain and destruction the structure would physically represent.[62] Again, concern about authenticity emerges. The structure must be true to the nature of the tragedy and the wishes of community members, something that larger memorial proposals are critiqued for lacking.[63] Another interviewed stakeholder argues that a good memorial must go "beyond functional use" and

instead give "feeling that your tragedy isn't isolated, it extends to other people."[64] In an

interview, one visitor to the memorial expressed that he felt the memorial was "real" because it

"tries to show the neighborhood. The porches and the chairs are friendly." The visitor recognized

that identifiable characteristics of neighborhood culture (friendly gatherings of neighbors

outdoors daily, the fabled stoop culture, resilience and a commitment to returning home) were

incorporated into the memorial. A resident of the Lower Ninth Ward argues that the memorial

was authentic because "a local man designed it." Again, authenticity is linked to authority, and in

this reckoning, community members should be given more authority than outsiders. Multiple

readings of the Lower Ninth Ward memorial are possible, readings that both reinforce and

contradict larger collective memory narratives about the neighborhood. It could be seen, for

example, as a symbol of Ninth Ward resident's triumph over the bulldozers, their ability to keep

their communal culture and rebuild, slowly but surely, despite a lack of government support or

aid. It could also be read as a lament, a commentary about how far the neighborhood still has to

go, especially when visitors look out from the memorial over the nearby wreckage. If visitors

have been immersed in the post-Katrina memory narrative of national resilience (see chapter

five), the memorial can serve to reassert or counteract those manifestations of public memory.

Indeed, vulnerability and resilience, or survivors and victims, are dialectical. This memorial, like

the neighborhood itself, may be read as a symbol of resilience, rebirth, and the spirit of the

people of New Orleans, or it may be read as a symbol of destruction, tragedy, and abandonment.

Since the Lower Ninth Ward monument's completion, it has become a geographical

locus for many commemorative actions in the city. When George W. Bush visited the city for the

second anniversary of the storm, for example, a "modest protest" of activists marched from the

memorial site chanting "George Bush, You Can't Hide" down St. Claude Avenue.[65] During the

Fifth Anniversary of the Storm, U.S. Representative Maxine Waters delivered a speech at the memorial lauding the resilience of the Lower Ninth.[66] A Katrina commemoration march ended in a rally at the memorial, and in the afternoon, the memorial was the launching point for a Second-Line parade and the site of a block party.[67] To many, the memorial presents a vision of a resilient Ninth Ward, a neighborhood that has faced tragedy and maintained its porch culture and communal identity. At the same time, however, the memorial evokes symbols of a community still in limbo: the main structure has only two walls, walls which frame visitors' views of similarly unfinished houses in the surrounding streets.

The Lower Ninth Ward memorial is not the only small-scale community memorial along the Gulf Coast, however. Designers of a Katrina memorial in Biloxi claim that their commemorative structure will raise awareness of the damage a storm can cause.[68] Here, the function of commemoration is re-imagined as consciousness raising. The Biloxi memorial committee's goal is to educate people about the dangers of hurricanes so that visitors "realize that a storm is that serious; it can wipe out many people."[69] Advocates justify the nearby St. Bernard Parish memorial because it will be "a place for the community to come together to heal."[70] Smaller, inexpensive memorials and vernacular tokens seem automatically credible, authentic, and moving according to residents and visitors alike. Although stakeholders and commentators list many different functions for the memorials (gathering place, reflection place, symbol of resilience, etc.), the strategic ambiguity allows multiple visitors to meet their individual needs. Larger scale projects, however, are met with increased skepticism and dissent. These include the proposed new Big Well Museum in Greensburg and the proposed New Orleans Katrina Memorial.

Greensburg Memorial and Museum

Fig. 6.9. The current Greensburg memorial, Photographed by Katherine M. Cruger, July 9, 2010.

A small memorial currently stands in Greensburg, "In Loving Memory" of those residents who lost their lives during the tornado. It is of similar size and look as the granite marker at the Lower Ninth Ward memorial. At the top of the marker is an image of the town's old water tower, which read "Greensburg: Home of the Big Well." Etched below are the ten names of town residents who died during the storm, and city officials have plans to add an eleventh resident who passed away shortly thereafter. Vernacular additions to the memorial include flowers, cards, and trinkets. However, there is far less of these vernacular outpourings than in New Orleans, partially because the town cemetery is so nearby.

In addition to this small memorial, the town is planning to create a new museum. The museum would house their primary attractions before the storm: The Big Well and the "Space Wonder" Pallasite Meteorite. It will also be designed to attract eco-tourists interested in the town's sustainability and will include artifacts and exhibits about the disaster and its aftermath. Currently, the project is only in the preliminary stages.

One of the planning initiatives for the new Big Well museum is to include the input and experiences of town residents. On the city's website, an online survey was posted for residents to offer their ideas for the museum and share eyewitness accounts of their experiences in December of 2009. Questions on the survey also ask for input about how the history of the Big Well should be constructed, what elements of the story should be included, and which are superfluous. "As your city prepares to invite tourists back to experience the Big Well and construct a space to permanently tell all the Greensburg stories, your input is vital," the survey insists.[71] Local volunteers are currently soliciting "tangible objects" from residents which might "provide a unique perspective or tell a personal story" about either the tornado or the rebuilding process. More qualitative questions ask residents "what does the Big Well mean to you?" or "what does green mean?" After the survey results were collected, a focus group was formed to hone ideas and consider designs. Following this preliminary phase, Greensburg held an open house asking for input in the museum. The open house lasted a total of seven days, eigh hours per day and was open to the public. Residents held an exploratory design meeting with BNIM architects in August of 2010, where they were invited to share their thoughts and ideas for the museum.

As I complete this dissertation, no further progress on the museum has been made. Currently, however, the city website has a "wishlist" posted of items the museum wants for

exhibits. Examining the list does provide some insight into how residents wish to commemorate the storm:

> We're looking for:
> - ID Badges people wore to get into the city
> - Those "R" sheets of paper used to identify resident cars or any other similar ID materials that everyone had to have
> - Pennants from the high school or Big Well
> - Christmas ornaments given by the Wichita "Parrotheads" to all the kids
> - One or more of the thousands of toothbrushes donated . . . or "survival kits" that were donated
> - Any of the actual signs that people made and put on their house AND / OR old Big Well signage
> - Ticket stubs from the movie (Spiderman 3) the forensics kids saw that night in Salina[72]

Emphasis is placed on the quotidian – toothbrushes and movie stubs from the night of the storm. Official identification materials are also solicited, ID badges for example, which indicates that government response in the initial days will be represented in museum exhibits. The flyer advertising the open house meetings to the town remarks, "An unremarkable object may have a remarkable story that brings it to life." These everyday items will lend authenticity to the museum, Greensburg reasons, and "make the experience real for visitors." It is clear, however, that residents have not quite made up their mind about the vision they want to share with visitors through the new museum. "You're Invited," the flyer reads, to input your feedback and make suggestions for the new narrative vision of the town, "whether it's the story of Greensburg, the Big Well, the tornado, or the story of Greensburg in the future."

"What Will It Memorialize?" Struggles Over Authenticity in Official Commemoration

As with sustainability initiatives, discussions of whether and where to rebuild, and debates over the role that race plays in vulnerability explored earlier in this dissertation, residents

also contest how, why, and even *if* storms should be memorialized. Included in one version of

the $14.4 billion dollar budget for the rebuilding of New Orleans is a proposal for a grand and

imposing Hurricane Katrina memorial.[73] The proposal cites duel motivation: honoring the

victims of Katrina, and also creating a new tourist attraction to bolster the city's struggling

economy.[74] Rep. Cheryl Grey, who co-sponsored the bill creating a Hurricane Katrina Memorial

commission in 2006, adds a third function for a memorial: it will act as a "promise that we won't

let something like this happen in the future."[75] Proponents of the memorial believe the project

would create a designated place for citizens and visitors to reflect on Katrina. As Mary Len

Costa expresses to USA Today, "It's something that's with us everyday, the remnants of it

anyway, and I think it's affected so many people, not only the city and its fiber – its architectural

and structural fiber – but also the fabric of the people living here."[76] According to the Katrina

National Memorial Park mission statement, the project will draw tourists from all across the

nation and model "green" principles to visitors.[77] The museum and surrounding park will

sponsor programs in the arts, the history of New Orleans, and disaster prevention.[78] However,

dissenters seem unimpressed by plans to erect a monument described in news media as

"Homeric, on the order of the Arch of Triumph" when residents are still homeless and basic city

services are Spartan at best.[79] City Council president Oliver Thomas insists that the best way to

honor Katrina's victims is to improve schools, streets, and safety in New Orleans. "If we do

that," he says, "it will be the greatest Katrina memorial we could have."[80] "What exactly will it

memorialize?" asks one interviewed resident of the proposed multi-million dollar Katrina

memorial.[81] This large-scale Katrina Memorial is still just a hypothetical exercise however, since

no money is raised, no location chosen, and no design decided upon.

Even in rebuilding projects not explicitly linked to memorializing, similar concerns arise. Architects and planners are tasked by residents to accurately represent and incorporate the past into designs while rebuilding in a more contemporary and sustainable manner. For example, One of the designers of the *Make It Right* homes explains that "We went into the project feeling a contemporary house could represent history without being pastiche. We've interpreted traditional elements."[82] As outlined in chapter four, the plan for sustainable redevelopment in Greensburg required the incorporation of traditional Kansan values. Olick reminds us that social and collective remembering is often more about the present and future than it is about the past.[83] Concerns about projecting "authentic" narratives of the past often monopolize discussions of contemporary architecture in Greensburg and the Lower Ninth. The Silo Eco Home, in fact, is an homage to the town's grain silo, a structure that weathered the storm and represents the resilience and strength of Greensburg's people and past. Memory permeates the discussion of redevelopment in New Orleans, especially among residents who fear their history will be bulldozed and turned into condos for the upwardly mobile. In essence, all places are memory places.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I explore the link between place and memory. I then analyze different vernacular and official commemorative structures. Through the analysis of these different commemorative artifacts in Greensburg and New Orleans, it becomes clear that sites of public memory can serve many different functions based upon the needs and desires of the stakeholders, mourners, and visitors. First, memorials can offer catharsis. As in the case of the narrative book projects in Greensburg, that catharsis can be personal and individual. However, memorials can also offer a site for communal healing and collective remembrance. Second,

memorials can be exercises in preservation. Stakeholders often expressed that they could freeze a historic moment so that it would not be lost over time. Third, those who experienced an event can bear witness through the creation of memorials. Furthermore, these sites can be places where visitors witness a true account. Fourth, and relatedly, memorials can function to reveal the masked truth. Fifth, and perhaps most novelly in these two cases, memorials can also have an educative function. Proposals for large-scale official memorials in both New Orleans and Biloxi include educative elements about sustainability and the dangers of hurricanes respectively. In Greensburg, the new museum will offer visitors exhibits about the history of the Big Well and the Palasite meteor as well as a reconstruction of the night of the storm, and the sustainable rebirth of the town in the tornado's aftermath. Finally, and most importantly, memorials project a specific vision of the past, present, and future of a community or body politic. This vision can affect community identity, but it can also shape prosthetic memories of an event not directly experienced by tourists and visitors.

Furthermore, this analysis indicates that whether a memorial is "good" or not, whether it performs these functions, is directly related to its perceived level of authenticity. Stakeholders expressed repeatedly the need to accurately represent the past, avoid amnesia, and set the record straight. Competing visions of the past are so important because they frame and code residents and visitors' present actions as well as their understandings of what it to come. This impulse bleeds over into any discussion of design, be it the plans for a multi-million dollar memorial in New Orleans or the plans to reopen a charter school in the Ninth Ward. Finally, it is important to remember that choices made when creating and reproducing artifacts of public or collective memory have very real and material consequences. "At a time when the rebuilding of New

Orleans is uneven and incomplete, how we come to remember and forget the tragedy of

Hurricane Katrina has far-reaching political and social implications," argues Lynnell Thomas.[84]

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Chapter 7

Disaster, Disruption, and Resilience: A Conclusion

Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, and many other social theorists of the twentieth century lamented the forces of neoliberalism, capitalism, and globalization that actively and dangerously encroach upon everyday life.[1] Amin and Thrift drew on these treatises of modernity to explore the ways in which cities are connected, distributed, networked, and plural.[2] For these spatial theorists, everyday life was sacred, and the unwelcome changes of modernity were slow and iterative. What is unique about this dissertation project, however, is that it explores communities dealing with and recovering from disaster. Disasters act as moments of rupture; they pose the chance and challenge of rebuilding a community, city, network, economy, and political system from the ground up. As Rozario reminds us, capitalist development actually depends upon catastrophe and a culture of calamity to compound physical manifestations of modernity.[3] While the contested nature of the quotidian or everyday life remains largely unnoticed in the day to day, disastrous moments of rupture force the politics of everyday life into the open, and force stakeholders to reconsider what their community should and can do and be.

The purpose of this study was to interrogate the interconnected nature of rhetoric, sustainability, material space, national resilience, and community identity in the politics of communities recovering from disaster. To access these complex theoretical concepts, I engaged in a comparative case study of Greensburg, Kansas and the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans, Louisiana – two communities who, to differing extents, made the decision to incorporate sustainability initiatives into their redevelopment plans. In chapter one, I defined and outlined what I meant by sustainability, rhetoric, space, and memory. I then provided background information on each of my two sites. In chapter two, I explored my method of rhetorical criticism

that incorporates feminist commitments, qualitative research, and ethnographic fieldwork into traditional textual criticism.

My first research question asked what symbolic and material strategies stakeholders employ to justify green rebuilding. Chapter three addresses this question, and I analyze the rhetorics residents and the media use to justify and reframe sustainability as appropriate for the common American. I first outline traditional populist argument, and then argue that residents of Greensburg and the Lower Ninth Ward amend populism for their own purposes, constructing a discourse of "populist environmentalism." In my analysis I discovered that populist environmentalism relies on three topoi: Common Thrift, Common Roots, and Common Sense. I then analyze the possibilities and limitations of this populist rhetoric for Greensburg and New Orleans as well as other felled communities and environmentalist rhetors. Chapter five also contributes insight to this research question, as I interrogate the link between national identity and the resilient narratives of Greensburg and New Orleans cultivated and constituted in presidential discourses. I analyze speeches of presidents Obama and Bush, both of whom evoke Greensburg and Katrina for a variety of different epideictic occasions including commencement addresses, State of the Union Addresses, and speeches commemorating the anniversary of each disaster. I argue that resilience is an ideograph, and that resiliency rhetoric is comprised of three topoi: approaching disaster as opportunity, resilience as emerging bigger and stronger than before, and finally, resilience as responsibility to fellow Americans. I link this prominence of resilience with national iterations of collective memory and the post-Katrina shift in national security emphasis from preparedness to resilience, and I conclude by arguing that treating environmentalism as a national security issue is a legitimate and successful tactic for promoting sustainability initiatives in hostile environments.

My second research question asks how memory is evoked, cultivated, and utilized in Greensburg and the Lower Ninth Ward during the recovery process. In essence, all chapters address this question because elements of memory are present in residents' use of populist argument, in the epideictic constructions of national resilience and good citizenship, in design plans for a sustainable Greensburg or New Orleans, and in the media coding of Katrina. One of the central assumptions I make, in fact, is that spaces of everyday life and media representations are just as memory-laden as designated memory places. However, memory places should certainly not be overlooked and it is chapter six that addresses my second research question most directly. I tackle issues of memory and commemoration by analyzing vernacular and official memorial texts in Greensburg and New Orleans, including discourses about future memorial projects. I began, however, by highlighting the tendency of displaced residents to connect their ability to remember with space and place. This link was most commonly expressed as concern about the inability to remember one's past without the concrete connection to artifacts collected throughout one's life. I then argue that the efficacy of different memorial artifacts is judged by stakeholders based upon perceived authenticity. A rhetorical framing highlights the socially constructed nature of authenticity, which is essentially a struggle over power to code and decode narratives of personal and community identity.

Finally, my third research question addresses the link between space and representation, particularly in conjunction with race, gender, and class. Chapter four was my exploration into the racialization of both New Orleans and Greensburg, Kansas. First, I contextualize environmental justice and spatial justice using the work of Edward Soja.[4] Next, I explore two instances of the appropriation of environmental justice discourses for discriminatory ends. First, officials concentrated on symbolically "cleansing" New Orleans of undesirable elements paired with the

lack of concern about actually purging minority neighborhoods of toxic sludge after the storm. Second, city planners argued that it was the environmentally sustainable choice to restore wetlands, ignoring the human geography of that choice, which would again displace poor black residents. I then link the social, economic, and geographic components of spatial injustice in the politics of redevelopment to media representations of communities recovering from disaster. I contrast media narratives of Greensburg and the Lower Ninth Ward, highlighting the ways in which rhetorics of normalized whiteness and race-averse discourses perpetuate harmful stereotypes about (poor and/or black) residents while maintaining whiteness as the status quo. Based upon its findings, this dissertation offers many critical contributions to the field.

Significance

This study is significant for rhetorical theory and method in many ways. First, it offers a comparative case which reveals the mutually constitutive relationship between the national imaginary and narratives of disaster, recovery, and resilience. Parables of national resilience emerge repeatedly in U.S. history, a nation defined by its "culture of calamity," Rozario insists.[5] However, in this dissertation I argue that the resilience ideograph not only instructs Americans about how they are to perform the role of the good citizen, it influences security policy and government structure. This analysis suggests that the relationship between sustainability, resilience, and security cultivates fertile ground for practitioners and advocates seeking support for public policy such as alternative energy projects or infrastructure development.

Second, and relatedly, this dissertation suggests that there are multiple potential applications of populist argument outside of the Tea Party or the right wing. In fact, it suggests that labeling something as "common" or "for the common American" acts to galvanize one's position against criticism from liberal and conservative alike. For environmental activists, this

posits a potential way to fortify discourses of sustainability against manufactured controversy. By arguing that sustainability makes sense, saves money, and stays true to a community's roots,

Furthermore, this study asserts that rhetoricians concerned with place need to pay close attention to the racial, gendered, and classed aspects of human geography. Third, by asserting the interconnected nature of environmental and social vulnerabilities, I argue for a move toward *spatial* justice as a compliment to social justice scholarship. I indicate how environmental responsibility can be appropriated for discriminatory ends by large institutions and individual citizens alike, and urge other scholars to explore the emancipatory potential of reclaiming the space of everyday life, as advocated in the theoretical work Michel de Certeau, Doreen Massey, Henri Lefebvre, and Edward Soja.[6]

Fourth, this study has combined rhetorical analysis of vernacular and official artifacts of public memory with evaluative discourses of residents and stakeholders. This approach offers more insight than critique of just the structures alone, and creates a discursive space for subjects to speak for themselves. In the cases of Greensburg and the Ninth Ward, a concern with authenticity and "appropriate" representation is the primary consideration of community members when evaluating the efficacy of memory places. Comparative analysis reveals the multiple and dueling functions that memorials (be they literary projects, impromptu shrines, or multi-million dollar museums) serve for mourners, visitors, and public officials.

Finally, this dissertation as a whole interrogates the complexity of "sustainability" as a process, telos, and god (or devil) term. By exploring the rhetorical justifications and challenges of rebuilding sustainably in two communities felled by natural disaster, this study finds that sustainability rhetorics are, at times, not sustainable. In the case of the Lower Ninth Ward, indifferent government officials and a lack of united vision and resources narrows the available

possibilities for environmentally conscious redevelopment (or any redevelopment, for that matter.) However, residents are experiencing moderate success through grassroots organizing, stakeholder participation, and advocating incremental change slowly over time. Evidence of their success existed purely by nature of the fact that the neighborhood has not be bulldozed or surrendered to "nature," and concerned residents are still fighting the battle for spatial justice.

In contrast, Greensburg Kansas has overcome its funding woes and rebuilt relatively swiftly. The buildings on Main Street were completed during my last visit in July of 2010, less than three years after the tornado destroyed ninety-five percent of the town. While city planning meetings were certainly sites of vocal and constant contestation, shared governance and stakeholder participation yielded a successful and innovative development plan. Residents masterfully employed populist discourses to garner local and corporate support for their new vision, and raised billions of dollars to make the sustainable development plan a reality. By looking at these two communities side by side – at once disarmingly similar and wildly different – this study can suggest strategies for other communities looking to incorporate sustainable planning and translate theory to practice. First, utilize resilience as a uniting ideograph and underlying justification for environmental responsibility. Second, incorporate mechanisms for public participation and shared governance early and often. Third, be aware of the spatial nature of (in)justice and conceive of "the environment" as human geography, not a pristine space to be safeguarded. While this dissertation does offer many contributions, there are limitations to the study as well.

Limitations

The two sites I have chosen – the Lower Ninth and Greensburg – are challenging and unconventional texts for rhetorical analysis. In this dissertation I have attempted to grapple with

these communities' discursive and non-discursive elements in ethnographically-informed rhetorical criticism. This project presents the rhetorical critic with a number of challenging responsibilities, the least of which is to describe coherently the experience of being *in place* for readers who have not visited either site. I have supplemented my analysis with thick description and images, but there are still a number of critical gaps that merit attention.

Methodologically, this study has many restrictions. First, I regret the short tenure of my stay in both sites. As I mention in chapter two, building trust with participants takes time, and "true" ethnographers spend months or even years in their research site. More time means access to more data and increased understanding as a member of the in-group. I would feel more qualified to comment on the public discourses and spatial practices of each community had I spent more time in each place. Furthermore, although this is a comparative study, I spent a much longer time in New Orleans than I did in Kansas. Mostly, this had to do with monetary restraints. I located a volunteer organization in the Lower Ninth Ward who would house and feed me for six weeks for a nominal fee. During my return visit, I stayed with friends. In Greensburg, locating a host family proved problematic and I could not afford to stay in the local hotel for more than a few days at a time. Once I made connections with residents, they offered to let me stay with them on a future visit, but by that time the summer was over and it was time to begin writing and teaching again. Similarly, there was far more media coverage of Hurricane Katrina than the Greensburg tornado and as a result (see Appendix E), my analysis is skewed toward the Ninth Ward.

Additionally, this study was constrained by a short scope. Neither Greensburg or the Ninth Ward is entirely rebuilt yet. That process will take years, and in the case of the Ninth Ward, there is plenty of doubt about whether it will ever happen. Communities and cities cannot

be bound like many texts – they are living things, constantly shifting and moving. To keep this study manageable, I have bracketed my media texts from the nights of the respective storms to the fifth year anniversary of Katrina. I visited both sites in the summer of 2010, but had little experience in either place before then and rely on peoples' stories and pictures to fill in those gaps. Additionally, large-scale memorial projects are still in the planning stages in both communities. While I reflect upon these proposed projects in chapter six, I regret that I could not revisit the memorials upon their completion, which might offer additional insight into the processes of public participation and collective memory.

Furthermore, I am haunted by the conversations I had with Joe in New Orleans (and other graduate students before that) about the limitations of studying and analyzing the discourse of and about a community where I am an outsider. Throughout this study I have attempted to be upfront about my positionality, biases, and experiences, and the insights yielded from this dissertation have come from the perspective of an east coast city girl. On the other hand, I believe that the analyses from a variety of perspectives of these two disasters and the media narratives and rebuild projects that followed can yield additional insights that may or may not otherwise have been uncovered. I have actively and reflexively worked to avoid neocolonial impulses to "fix" these two communities, but I struggle to walk the fine line between the desire not to put words into participants' mouths and the critical impulse to reveal hidden discourses of power, discrimination, and dominance.

A final limitation I wish to discuss is the relatively small contribution this project makes toward tackling spatial and social injustices. As I outlined in the introduction and methods chapters, my research is driven partially by activist commitments and agendas, and is therefore unabashedly normative. I seek to use my training as a rhetorical critic to unmask environmental

and spatial injustice. I would like, however, to go beyond this critical unmasking and translate my commitments into real world change. While I did volunteer for six weeks this summer and have aided two sustainability nonprofits remotely for the last six months, this dissertation product is still prepared for an academic audience. In the future, I hope to take the insights gained here and apply them in the fight for environmental justice and sustainable planning efforts. It is my belief that university-community linkages can go beyond paid consulting activities and scholar-activists can ethically and beneficially intervene to make the world a better place.

Suggestions for Future Research

The results of this study have several implications for future research. First, following Cintron, Conquergood, and Pezzullo, I highlight the benefits for rhetorical critics of engaging in ethnographic analysis and fieldwork.[7] While I was limited by time and means, this study also suggests a need to analyze disaster and recovery as longitudinal processes. As discussed in chapter five, the narratives, foci, and framing of Hurricane Katrina shifted dramatically from day one to day four, and continue to shift as we approach the sixth anniversary of the storm. These transitions are just as important to analyze and contextualize as the kinds of snapshots afforded by close textual analysis of a clearly bounded text.

Additionally, this dissertation points to the increased use of populist arguments in new and nontraditional settings, the application of which warrants further analysis in varying contexts and with varying functions. While I have focused on populism's possibilities for environmental argument, other scholars may wish to interrogate its uses for other social movements such as the women's rights or LGBTQ rights movements, specific pieces of legislation such as healthcare, etc.

While critical race and whiteness scholars traditionally tackle their two topics separately, my study suggests that rhetorical strategies of race-averse discourse and normalized whiteness mirror each other and are interconnected, interwoven, and interdependent. Additional case studies would aid in fleshing out this theory and further interrogating the complex relationship between representation of dominant and oppressed peoples.

Furthermore, this dissertation reveals the ways in which public or collective memory can be transcribed on entire communities, instead of being limited to designated commemorative structures or sanctioned memory places. Finally, my study points to the myriad of ways in which personal narratives and stories are adopted by political figures as illustrative parables to teach lessons about what it means to be an American citizen. Despite their grossly different political platforms and agendas, both presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama appropriate the resiliency of Greensburg and New Orleans to further their vision of national identity. Other rhetoricians might explore similar symbolic resources used to constitute the national imaginary.

Green Rebirth

The mythic creature the phoenix can be found in many different cultures from ancient Rome to China. When this fabled bird comes to the end of its lifecycle it ignites in flames, and from the ashes a new bird is born. The phoenix is embraced as a symbol of rebirth, renewal, and a new beginning. In our hypermodern reality, our culture of calamity, Greensburg Kansas and post-Katrina New Orleans represent a similar symbol of resilience, renewal, and a fresh start. Unlike the phoenix, however, which is born from its ashes a photocopy of its predecessor, Greensburg and the Ninth Ward assert that from destruction emerges an opportunity to begin again and create something better. A renewed hope infuses media and resident discussions of

"green rebirth," bolstered by sustainability's association with innovation, progress, and freshness.
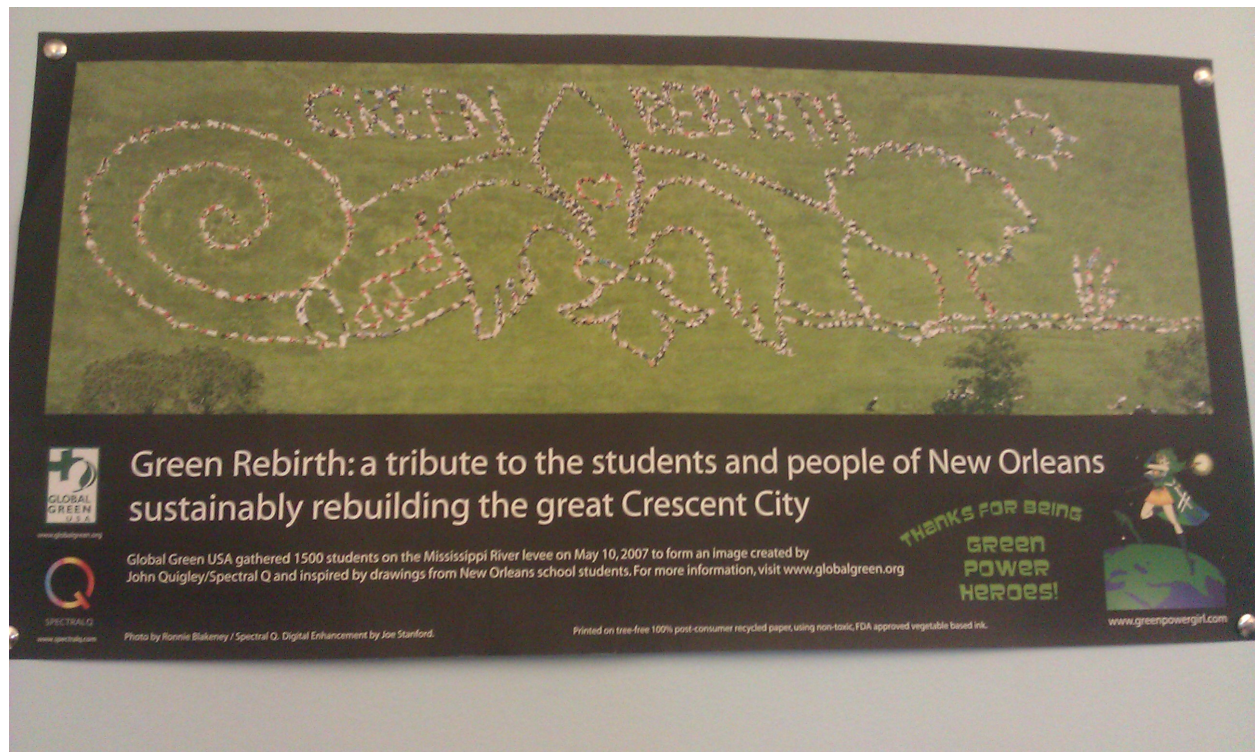

Fig. 7.1. Green Rebirth Art Installation. Photograph taken by Katherine M. Cruger, June 1, 2011.

In John Quigley's public art installation, 1500 students (themselves symbols of youth, exuberance, and possibility) used their bodies as a canvas to create an image that hailed the possibilities for a green rebirth in New Orleans (see Fig. 7.1.) The piece of human art forms a fleur de lis accompanied by a tree, sun, and flowers, captured in an aerial photograph. The message is clear: sustainable development offers promise for the future and a way of accounting for the past. Similarly, bloggers and media professionals consistently frame Greensburg as a place marked by green rebirth: in this narrative, the struggling "ghost town" dies and a new Greensburg emerges, "Better, Stronger, Greener" than before. Just as cities can be coded as resilient because they can also be coded as vulnerable, the evocative power of green rebirth is rooted in its possibility only through destruction and decay. Greensburg and the Lower Ninth

Ward inspire citizens and public officials alike because they appeal to our desires for apocalyptic

renewal, triumph in the face of tragedy, and the cultivation of our own sustainable selves.

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[1] See Lefebvre, *The Production*; De Certeau, *The Practice*.
[2] See Amin and Thrift, *Cities*.
[3] Rozario, *The Culture of Calamity*.
[4] Soja, *Spatial Justice*.
[5] Rozario, *The Culture of Calamity*.
[6] See De Certeau, *The Practice*; Massey, *For Space*; Lefebvre, *The Production*; Soja, *Spatial Justice*.
[7] Cintron, *Angel's Town*; Conquergood, "Rethinking Ethnography"; Pezzullo, *Toxic Tours*.

Epilogue

A New Day, A New Disaster

The unfolding Japanese tragedy also should prompt Americans to closely study our own plans for coping with natural disasters and with potential nuclear plant accidents to make sure they are, indeed, strong enough. We've already seen how poor defenses left New Orleans vulnerable to Hurricane Katrina and how industrial folly and hubris led to a devastating blowout and oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.[1]

As I edited the final draft of this dissertation, news broke that a magnitude nine earthquake struck Japan, causing a tsunami that killed thousands and endangered the western seaboard of the United States. Of nearly 14,000 dead identified to date, more than half of the quake-tsunami victims were elderly, again pointing to a vast difference in disaster vulnerability for different populations.[2] One month after the quake, displaced survivors echo familiar fears about an inability to return to their homes, and an unknown future. "I think 90 percent of people will never want to return. I think this city will disappear," says Ken Hiraaki of his hometown, Rikuzentakata.[3] Environmental concerns are foregrounded in public discourse as officials and citizens cope with uncertainty about the effects of multiple nuclear power plant meltdowns.

Even issues of public memory are highlighted. The *New York Times*, for example, ran a piece about the lack of "disaster memory" in Japan.[4] Centuries old stone tablets warned about the possibility of earthquakes and tsunamis, reporters stress. The ancient markers caution, "High dwellings are the peace and harmony of our descendants... Remember the calamity of the great tsunamis. Do not build any homes below this point."[5] These commenters mirror smug talking heads post-Katrina who wondered why anyone would live in such a dangerous place.

In a manner of days after the disaster, talk of a sustainable Japan emerged. "I think we'll see a lot more sustainable homes and businesses being built in the next 10 years... all for a cleaner, more healthy Japan in the future," writes one environmental blogger.[6] Echoing

presidents Bush and Obama's resiliency rhetoric, the Green Horizon organization argues that

Japan's rebuilding challenge should be viewed as a "sustainable building opportunity."[7]

Additionally, San Francisco-based Architecture for Humanity has pledged to assist in the

sustainable rebuilding of Japan.[8] Once again, green rebirth emerges both as obstacle and as

exhilarating possibility.

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Alexis Petru, "Architecture Nonprofit Plans to Help Rebuild Japan," Sustainable AEC, accessed April 10, 2011,
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APPENDIX A

A Glossary of Acronyms

APNO = Action Plan for New Orleans: The New American City

BNOB = The Bring New Orleans Back Commission

DHS = Department of Homeland Security

DOE = Department of Energy

GSCMP = Greensburg Sustainable Comprehensive Master Plan

LEED = Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design

MIR9 = Make It Right Foundation: Lower Ninth Ward

SR = Sustainable Restoration: Holy Cross Historic District & Lower 9th Ward

APPENDIX B

Historic Timeline of Sustainable Discourses in New Orleans L9W and Greensburg

Aug 29 2005	**Hurricane Katrina makes landfall**
Sep 4 2005	US Green Building Council (USGBC) creates "The New Orleans Principles" during a planning charette in their annual conference in Atlanta
Sep 6 2005	Global Green USA begins weekly dialogues with Healthy Building Network, Enterprise Foundation, Habitat for Humanity and National Council of Churches to explore ways to rebuild New Orleans and the Gulf region with green building principles
Sep 17 2005	Global Green President Matt Petersen recruits honorary steering committee for Healthy Homes, Smart Neighborhoods Response Team including Leonardo DiCaprio, General Wesley Clark, Julian Bond and Lee Hamilton
Oct 8 2005	Alliance for Energy meeting in Baton Rouge with more than 100 attendees.
Dec 2005	Global Green works with USGBC to create a one-stop green building resource webtool for New Orleans residents.
Jan 2006	Global Green opens its Green Building Resource Center in New Orleans
	BNOB Plan is published; gives Lower Ninth Ward residents four months to reclaim homes or be bought out
Apr 2006	Global Green announces Sustainable Building Design Competition with actor Brad Pitt "to challenge the world to create a model green building housing development for New Orleans."
Jun 2006	Grand Opening of Global Green Resource Center in downtown New Orleans, showcasing more than 60 green building materials and providing books, magazines, computers and one-on-one consultation to residents as they begin to rebuild.
Jul 2006	First round of Global Green design competition for Holy Cross Neighborhood community center; of the six finalists, three have ties to NOLA.
Aug 2006	New Orleans City Council adopts green building resolution drafted by Global Green to begin the greening of city government.
Aug 29 2006	Design jury (led by Brad Pitt and Holy Cross residents) makes final selections; Winning design team (Workhop/apd) is featured on the Today Show with Pitt and Peterson.
Sep 2006	Global Green received grant from the Bush Clinton Katrina Fund to green NOLA schools; Clinton announces at press conference that New Orleans has been selected as a Clinton Climate Initiative City for assistance.
	State Hurricane Recovery Authority asks Global Green to draft green schools criteria for all of the hurricane impacted parishes in the state.

Oct 2006	Global Green begins monthly green building workshops at Resource Center in partnership with AIA-New Orleans, and begins monthly newsletter dedicated to green building in New Orleans
Dec 2006	Global Green purchases site in the lower 9th Ward and begins permitting and construction document process.
Jan 2007	Global Green begins outreach to all hurricane-impacted affiliates of Habitat for Humanity to provide education on green affordable housing throughout the region.
Feb 2007	City of New Orleans Recovery Director seeks grant from the DOE to fund solar technology development.
Apr 2007	Global Green drafts Green Seed School criteria
May 4 2007	**F5 tornado hits Greensburg, KS**
May 14 2007	First article mentioning "environmentally sensitive design" in the rebuilding of Greensburg is published.
May 2007	Global Green names the Home Depot Fund as its leading partner for the Holy Cross Project – "the first low income sustainable housing development in the ravaged Lower (th Ward."
	Global Green presents K-12 students aerial art showcase celebrating the Green Schools Initiative and Green Rebuilding of New Orleans – the large-scale human art mural created with the assistance of aerial artist John Quigley or Spectral Q (See Fig 7.10)
Aug 2007	Global Green hosts its first Louisiana Green Schools Workshop at Xavier University in New Orleans - a day long discussion of current green school practices and opportunities to create healthy, high performance classrooms throughout the state of Louisiana.
	Brad Pitt tours Lower Ninth Ward and the progress made on the Holy Cross Project; He is shocked how little the neighborhood has recovered and decides to create Make it Right NOLA.
Oct 2007	President Gorbachev tours the Holy Cross Project
Dec 2007	Make it Right kicks off with The Pink Project (see Fig)
	The names of 13 architects contributing to MIR are announced; Pitt promises first house by 3rd anniversary of Katrina
Mar 19 2007	Bill Clinton and Brad Pitt break ground at first MIR site.
Apr 2008	Construction on first Holy Cross Project home is completed.
Apr 25 2008	Pam Dashiell gives first interview lauding the potential for a sustainable Ninth Ward
May 2008	Holy Cross model home opens to public as a visitor's center.
May 11-13 2008	National Association of Home Builders held its annual Green Building Conference in New Orleans.
Aug 29 2008	Third anniversary of Katrina; First 6 MIR homes completed.
Nov 3 2008	Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education awards Tulane University its "Campus Sustainability Leadership Award" for their efforts around the city.
Jan 2009	Construction begins on additional single family homes in the Holy Cross Project.

May 2009	The Greater New Orleans Foundations awards 14 grants, $500,000 in total to organizations dealing with post-Katrina environmental issues and resiliency projects in New Orleans.
Aug 2009	Two more Holy Cross Project homes completed.
	U.S. Green Building Council honors MIR for building the "largest, greenest neighborhood" of LEED Platinum homes in America.

APPENDIX C

Sustainability Projects in the Lower Ninth Ward and Greater New Orleans

Lower Ninth Ward

Global Green USA's Holy Cross Project	Building a visitor's center, five single family homes, and a community center in the Holy Cross Neighbhorhood of the Lower Ninth Ward to educate residents about green building.	2006
Make It Right Foundation (MIR9)	Striving to building 150 affordable and sustainable homes in the Ninth Ward for displaced residents.	2007
Historic Green	Working to assure that residents can rebuild their homes sustainably and still maintain their cultural and historic heritage.	2007
BNIM Architects' Holy Cross School	Developing a master plan to reuse and green the Holy Cross Charter School	2008
Lower Ninth Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement and Development (CSED)	Fighting the Army Corps of Engineer's plan to expand the canal, Achieving carbon neutrality as a neighborhood, Restoring wetlands, Making St. Claude avenue a corridor for energy efficient businesses	2006

Greater New Orleans

The Green Project	Selling recycled building materials and conducting regular workshops on sustainability.	1997
Salvation Army's EnvirRenew	Building and repairing 250 green and energy efficient homes	
Deep South Center for Environmental Justice		
Greencorps		

APPENDIX D

Informal Interview Guide

The following list of questions may not all be asked. Where appropriate, follow up questions might be asked which are not on this list based upon subject response.

1) How long have you been
    a. Volunteering with lowernine.org? OR
    b. Living in Greensburg KS/the Ninth Ward? OR
    c. Interested in sustainability?
2) Why have you chosen to work/live/volunteer here?
3) What does "sustainable" or "sustainability" mean to you?
4) In your opinion, what are these positive results of this development project?
5) In your opinion, what are the negative results of this development project?
6) What does "green" mean to you?
7) What makes this community different from other communities?
8) It has been said that Greenburg/Lower Nine can be an example for other communities who want to rebuild green. Do you think this is true? Why or why not?
9) What makes "sustainable development" more difficult or tricky than other kinds of building projects?
10) What makes "sustainable development" more beneficial than other types of development?

APPENDIX E

List of Factiva Database Searches and Resulting Media Texts for Analysis[1]

Keywords	Publications	Date Range	Relevant/Total Hits
Sustainab* AND Greensburg	All Publications	08-01-2005 through 09-30-2010	456/792
Sustainab* AND Lower Ninth Ward	All Publications	08-01-2005 through 09-30-2010	352/361
Resilien* AND Lower Ninth Ward	All Publications	08-01-2005 through 09-30-2010	104/347
Resilien* AND Greensburg	All Publications	08-01-2005 through 09-30-2010	191/291
Greensburg AND Tornado AND Katrina	All Publications	08-01-2005 through 09-30-2010	404/539
Greensburg AND Tornado AND Katrina	All Publications	08-01-2005 through 04-15-2011[2]	406/541

[1] Additionally, image searches were conducted in the New York Times, Times-Picayune, Los Angeles Times, Washington Post, TIME Magazine, and Newsweek websites.

[2] I amended the date span to account for recent articles tying the tsunami to Katrina and the Greensburg tornado.